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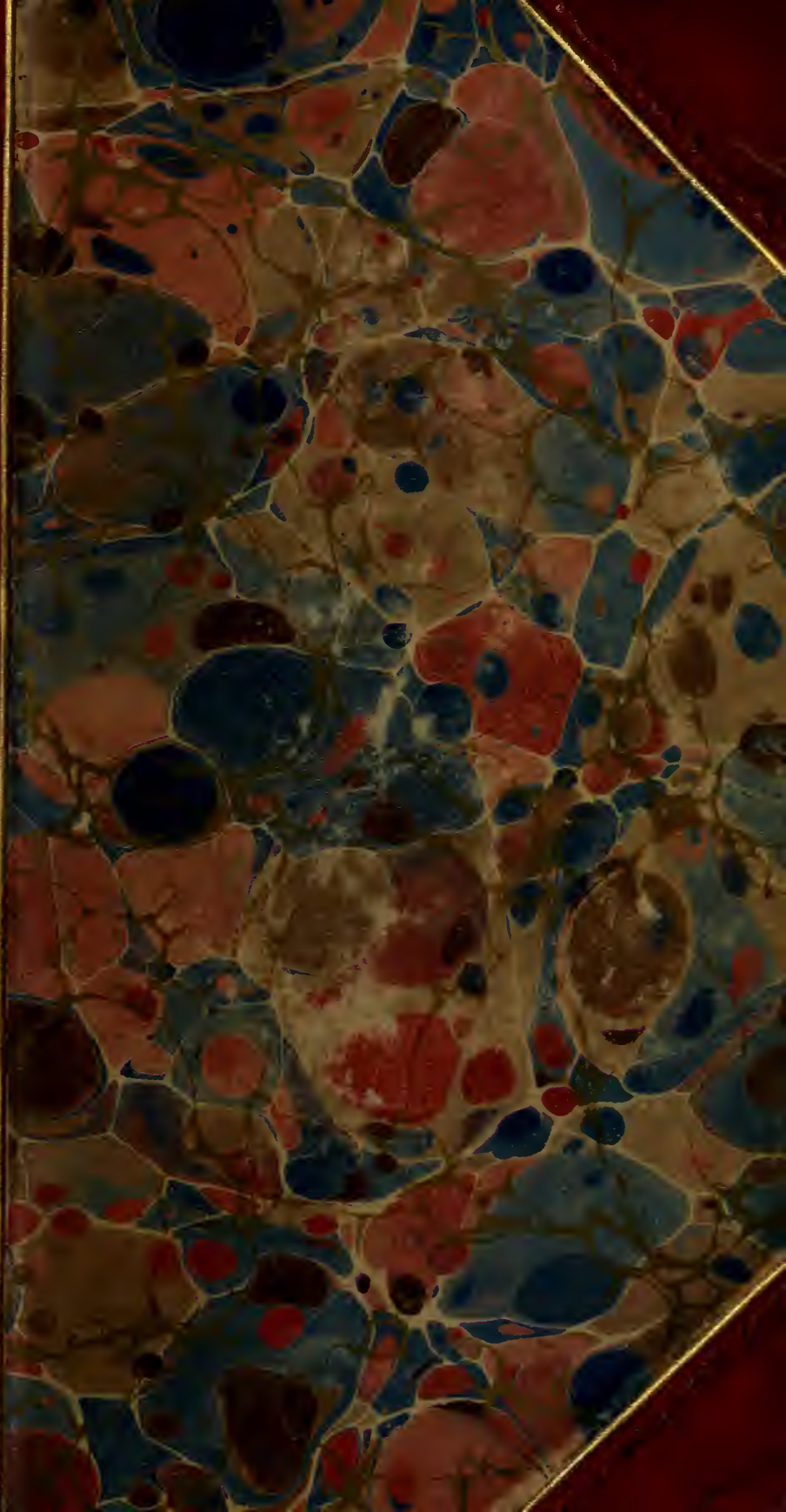

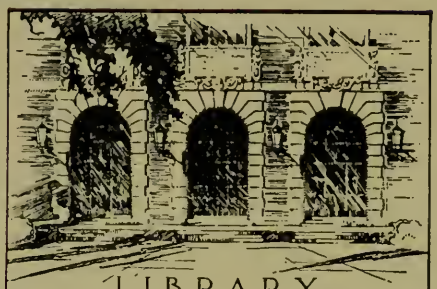

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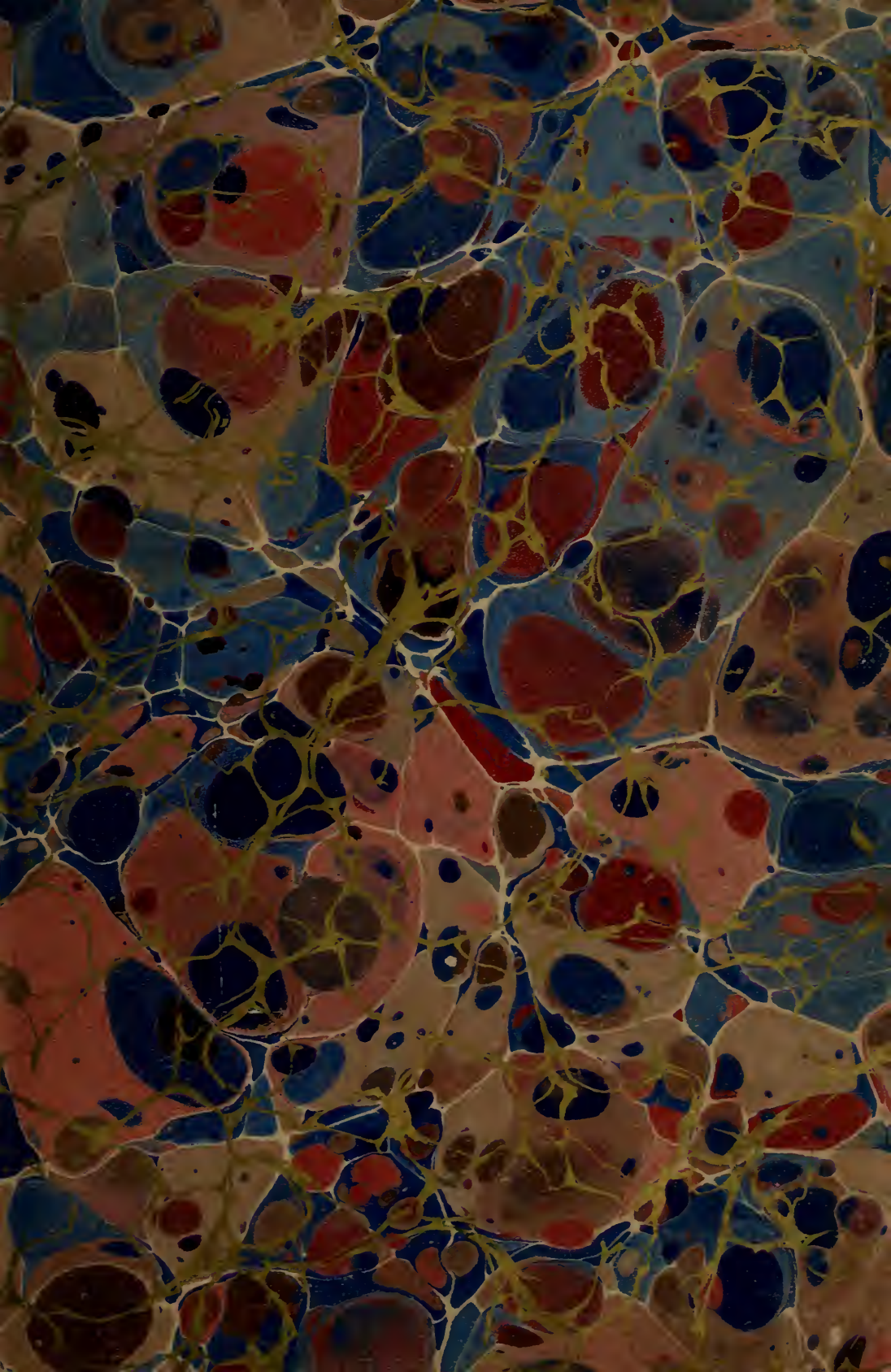

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THROUGH THE AGES

A PSYCHOLOGICAL ROMANCE.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF "THE HONEYMOON,"

"—— I doubt not, thro' the ages one increasing purpose runs,
And the thoughts of men are widen'd with the process of the suns."
TENNYSON.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOLUME II.

LONDON:
CHAPMAN & HALL, 193 PICCADILLY.
1876.

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NIGHT THE FOURTH.

—o—

"Not enjoyment and not sorrow,
Is our destined end or way;
But to act, that each to-morrow
Find us further than to-day."

LONGFELLOW.

I.

"When the hours of Day are numbered,
And the voices of the Night
Wake the better soul, that slumbered,
To a holy, calm delight;

. . . . .

"Then the forms of the departed
Enter by the open door;
The beloved, the true-hearted,
Come to visit me once more."

Walter. "The long day is over, my Conchita, and night at last again spreads her shades, filling my heart once more with joy, and my lonely existence with life; the day is over, and with it are ended the follies and the troubles of the unmeaning world, and the calm and majestic presence of the night is announced by the thousands of shining lights that sparkle on whichever side I cast my eyes. Night has come at last, and with it the coveted reward of a long and weary day; for thou, O night, art the wondrous book in which is written the history of our past, in records kept by suns; and when I turn the page, lo! thou castest thy mantle over all my cares, and they become as past for me. Day is over now, Conchita, and my patience would claim its reward. Will you not come? Oh, my dearest, come, I

beseech thee, and speak to me, and tell me again in those sweet tones of thine, the mystery of our past. For since you first appeared to me, oh, my angel of light, life has been as death without you, to this poor pilgrim of earth. Come to me once more, O love, come to me, and recount thy tale, for since you last night began it, I seem to live but in the past! that past which is so full of horror! that past in which you and I began to exist side by side, first as enemies, then as friends, and ultimately as lovers, from which period you tell me our happiness dates, for, strange to say, amongst those crimes and vices we first sowed the seeds of good."

Conchita. "I am faithful to my word, my beloved Walter. Behold me again by thy side, for when the bright light of the sun has departed, and the shades of night descend like dew upon the sleepy earth, then its departed children can render their forms visible to those who dearly love and long for them. An electric chain is formed which connects the two worlds, by which those who are loved and dearly remembered can descend and communicate with the dear ones they have left."

Walter. "I have longed for thy presence, my beloved one, with all the intensity of my being; the bright light of day is darkness to me. My day begins with the setting of the sun, for then do I anxiously await the appearance of my bright

star. When others seek repose, my soul awakens; and when it is midnight to them, it is mid-day to me, for my life's star then shines the brighter on thy forehead; for then dost thou appear to the lone watcher of the night in all thy radiant beauty. Oh, if other men could see thee, my love, as I see thee, they would never look on living woman more."

Conchita. "Wouldst thou preserve the power of communicating with me, my husband, remember to keep bright the chain that binds us to each other; suffer not its links to rust; know that it is purely magnetic, and would recoil with the slightest touch of an antagonistic element; and then I could no longer come at thy call."

Walter. "This can never be, my Conchita, for have you not assured me that since our last incarnations our souls have become as one. The negative and positive elements that compose our magnetic chain are now indissolubly united, and that chain will never slacken between us more,—promise me this, beloved partner of my life."

Conchita. "It is your path that is beset with dangers, dear Walter, not mine; I am safe, and far away from all the attractions of the earthly sphere. There are many temptations still in the path of your materiality; if you resist them successfully, we shall then be united for ever in a pure and holy magnetism, and shall need no more earthly trials

to purify our true love. Oh! Walter, will you resist them?"

Walter. "I feel myself strong to resist them, oh! my wife, since I know thou art ever near me now, and it has been the thought of thee that has supported me successfully through every temptation as it has occurred. I have felt thy sweet and spiritual influence, as if a kiss had descended on my brow from those sweet lips of thine."

Conchita. "Yes, I have ever been near thee, and have watched thy struggle—for such it has been to thee, my dear one; my kiss has not descended on thy brow until placed there to crown thy victory—thy victory over the materiality of the flesh. Oh, my Walter, thou art not yet wholly free from all earthly desires!"

Walter. "You will fortify me in my faith and allegiance to thee, my Conchita, by informing me of all the struggles my soul has already undergone, before it has become a true part of thine. Continue, I pray thee, the sad history of our far off past, when we were both in the infancy of our human existence, for surely the passions you have described which then possessed us, could only have belonged to a very undeveloped humanity."

Conchita. "Why call it sad, Walter? Why call that existence sad, to which we owe what we are this day. Hatred has been converted into love, vice has developed into virtue.

In one word, evil has been overcome, and has grown into good.

> Evil is of good twin brother
> Born of God, and of no other:
> And though truth seems slain of error,
> Through the ills that men deplore,
> Yet still nearer to perfection,
> She shall know a resurrection
> Passing on from glory,
> Unto glory evermore.

Before becoming good and perfect, we must have fully tasted the horrors of evil, and learnt by bitter experience the sad and fatal consequences of it; for there are few wise enough in their innocent state to make a good use of their free will, and follow with docility the teachings of their Spirit guides charged with the mission of developing them in the happy fluidic state. Some there are who are able to resist the influence of pride and envy; but these evil passions seduce, alas! too many; all those in fact who through giving way to them incur the penalty of a material existence, in which they discover but too soon the unhappy consequences of their fault. For, sooner or later, oh my husband, we who have fallen to a material earth must taste of that tree of good and evil, which fable has planted in the garden of Paradise. It is not that our nature is evil, for nothing is evil in itself, but ignorance is evil, ignorance is our enemy, ah! and a far more

dangerous enemy than all the devils, Màrras, and Ahrimans of ancient fable.

But time flies upon your globe, time flies, the earth goes round, and in a few more hours the sun will again cast his golden rays upon the phosphorescent waters of this beautiful bay, driving me away from your side, for you must not forget that we belong to different worlds, and that it is not alone the damp earth of the grave that is between us, but the veil of materiality with which thy spirit is confined to the earth sphere, as if by the strongest and most solid of stone walls. But I will continue our past history.

As I told you last night, Sakya had fled from Kapila, leaving father, home, and friends, to adopt an ascetic life, which, as we all thought at the time, was a great degradation to the royal caste to which he belonged, and in which he had been brought up.

After the prince's flight, the king's harem was completely broken up, and dispersed, the queen Pachapati, who as you know, was aunt and stepmother of the prince, retired with her two children to a country palace of Suddhodana, where only a few of the other women followed her. I took up my abode in the castle of Daphadah, a royal palace which might well have passed for a stronghold, in the southern slopes of the Himalayas. Hither came the king sometimes to visit me, but

he was the only stranger I ever saw, for I lived alone with my daughter and the few slaves and attendants whom the king had allotted to me when he assigned this distant fortress for my future home.

I did not dislike this sort of banishment, for although I was not allowed to wander forth far from the castle, within its walls I was in a certain sense a queen, in a small way; I was the sole mistress of everything around me, and even the lives of my servants belonged to me.

The chief reason for sending us to this distant fortress had been to put an end to the intimacy existing between my daughter Pastophora and Channa, for at last I had discovered this unfortunate attachment, and had informed the king of it. Suddhodana was furious, for he loved his daughter; and as he had often told me he desired a great marriage for her. To cut off all communication between the lovers, and to put a stop at once to the whole affair, he determined to send her with me to the mountains where she would be safe from Channa's constant attentions, and where, as we thought, she would soon forget her youthful passion.

But for love there seems to be no obstacles, and in spite of all our precautions, Channa found out somehow or other the secluded retreat of his love. No sooner had he ascertained this, than he flew to the neighbourhood of the castle where he took up his abode, and before I could even sus-

pect anything, he had managed to make his presence known to Pastophora and had stolen from her more than one interview.

You may imagine my anger when I heard of it; my indignation knew no bounds, for Channa, as you know, had been my enemy ever since that fatal evening in the gardens of the harem at Kapila. My first intention was to let the king know, but a second and darker idea came into my head, "If Suddhodana comes," I thought, "he will make a tremendous noise about it, and then end by granting pardon to Channa, and perhaps sending him again on a mission to Benares, for he is decidedly his friend; but if I am left to myself I have him in my power; here, in this solitary castle, away from the court and the city, I can do with him what I like, and no one will ever know, and in this way I attain two ends—I save my daughter and I rid myself of a dangerous enemy."

This seemed indeed the wisest plan, why should I not pursue it? But the difficulty was to get hold of Channa. That he had frequent interviews with my daughter I was convinced, but where did these take place and at what hour?

One evening I was on my way to Pastophora's apartments when I heard voices in one of the rooms. I stopped and listened; yes, there were voices, and I could hear them plainly, one was decidedly the voice of my daughter, the other that of a man. A man! what man could it be,

there was no man who ever had access to her part of the house, no slave would dare, against my express commands, to enter that secluded portion of the castle. I listened again . . . it was he, my enemy, Channa; at last then I had found him! Thanks to Siva the destroyer, at last I had him in my power, "Think not to escape me now, base wretch," I said to myself.

"Fly! oh Channa, fly!" I heard Pastophora exclaim inside the room, "I hear footsteps, oh fly! I tremble for you! If my mother were to see you Crishna himself could not save you from her fury, fly!"

Silence prevailed for a minute, and then I heard the man's voice again, saying, "I do not fear the anger of your mother, beloved of my heart; I have her in my power; I can with one word bring her to my feet, but for love of you I will go, I would not have you suffer for my cause, no, not for Nirwana."

I thought this would be a good opportunity to appear before them . . . I pushed the door . . . but lo! it was shut! I trembled with anger, I pushed and pulled but no, the solid wood remained immoveable. I shouted and I stamped, but all with no effect.

Suddenly the door opened, and Pastophora stood in the middle of the doorway as impassible as a statue.

My first look was for Channa—he was not

there—he had disappeared, one look was enough to convince me of that. But the gallery on the other side of the apartment was open, and from thence to the garden below was only about three yards; he had evidently escaped that way.

II.

> "Todo cuanto yo soy, todo es mentira!
> Solo hay verdad, y horrible, en mis dolores!"
>
> UNPUBLISHED POEM.

"I DID not expect you, mother," said the young girl with a steady voice.

"Ah! you were well accompanied, my child! What have you done with that man?"

"What man? I have been quite alone; what man do you suppose would enter my apartment against your express orders?"

I saw by her firm voice and manner that she was resolved not to betray the presence of her lover, and that all my threats and prayers would not change her firm determination. I then adopted another plan, and tried to obtain by policy what I knew I never should obtain by force. I therefore changed the tone of my voice, and strived to make her forget, if it were possible, all her fears.

"Happy you," I said, "my Pastophora, who can be amused and retain all your spirits in this prison! As for me, I can tell you I am heartily tired of it, and sigh day and night for liberty, and for the court from which your father has so unjustly banished us."

"It was, indeed, cruel of the king to shut us up thus in this deserted castle, where eagles and roes are our only companions. I think even Brahma has forgotten us by this time. I too, mother, sigh for the town and the harem."

"I have come to ask your advice, and am well pleased to find you in this state of mind. I have devised a plan, Pastophora, to fly from this deserted spot, and escape the constant watch of the soldiers that surround us. On every side we are surrounded by spies."

"Dispose of my life as you like, oh my mother; but forgive me if I fail at present to see by what means we are to escape from Dewadah, and these stone walls that should defy the power of Siva himself."

"You are mistaken, my child; it is you who can free us from this living tomb."

"I!"

"Yes, you; and what I am going to ask you, only you can accomplish."

"Ah! if it were true," she murmured with an accent that was almost lost in the soft breeze of the evening, "if we could fly from hence and once more inhabit those enchanting palaces on the shores of the sacred river!"

"I will tell you my plan, and then you will judge for yourself. Near this castle, which we both so hate, there is a cave, and from it emerges a secret passage which opens on the other side

into the woods beyond the fortifications, on the other side of the mountain; now in this cave there is at present hidden a man, be not astonished if I tell you his name . . . Channa. As I pronounced the name of her lover, the young girl gave a start. I went on without appearing to notice it. You see, Pastophora, I know your secret; but be not alarmed or frightened, I will not betray you, for I myself, as you know, love Channa, and I would be the last to hurt him, particularly on this occasion when we so need his courage and knowledge of the mountains that surround us to make good our escape."

I said this as naturally as I could, and I am almost sure the poor girl did not notice the horrible irony that was hidden in my words.

"I therefore come to ask you to write to him to acquaint him with our purpose, but he had better come here to-morrow night, when we shall not be suspected, and arrange our plan of escape. I assure you that we shall do nothing without some assistance from the outside, and who so good as he who is already our friend, and perhaps has come all this way with the intention of saving us?"

"I can hardly understand you, mother—you desire . . ."

"I desire that Channa, who is as much your friend as mine, and who cannot possibly deny you anything, should come here to-morrow night."

"And do you suppose that I can have more influence over him than you have?"

"And why not, when the influence in your case is of such a different nature? Besides, you know that I cannot write."

This seemed rather to shake her resolution of not betraying her lover.

"Channa," I went on, "pays you frequent visits; it is only one visit more that I ask for."

Pastophora opened her mouth to speak, but the voice expired in her throat; I could see that if she actually ignored the real object of my request, the inspiration of love revealed to her that something was wrong. She could not help seeing, in spite of all my cunning, that I wanted to make her the bait by which to bring Channa to my reach, the lure that would entice the game into the power of the hunter. In spite of all my precautions, she could not help seeing the truth, and this thought seemed to give her courage, for, lifting her head, she exclaimed—

'Now that you know all, mother, be generous . . . Do not ask from me more than I can do for you . . . I have offered you my life, it is true, but not Channa's . . . Oh, mother, I love him! Would you destroy what your daughter loves?'

"You are mad, child; surely some wicked Jakhas have taken possession of you that you thus distrust your own mother. Besides, is it

not for your own good? I know that Channa does not love me as he does you, but I do not dislike him, and when once we are free, and in the palace under the protection of Pachapati, who knows if the king may not consent to your marriage? I promise you, Pastophora, to do all that I possibly can to obtain the king's permission. . . . . Now, there—is not that enough? What more can I do?"

Saying this, I took from the table the little ivory tablets, and presented them to her.

"Have pity upon me!" she cried.

"Pity! but why pity, when I am going to give you your liberty? Come, my child, here are your tablets—write."

She took them, and again looked at me.

"Is this the only way of obtaining our liberty?"

"You write to him, and leave the rest to me?"

"If you will promise me . . . . . "

"All that you like."

"Not to injure him, to preserve his life . . . . "

"And why not?"

"Will you swear to it?"

"Yes, by Brahm, the all-powerful creator, I swear it to you. Are you satisfied now?"

"Yes, mother."

"Prove yourself worthy of calling me by the name you have given me . . . . . obey your mother, child."

"And what shall I write," she thought, rather than said.

I then dictated to her the following letter :—

"Come to-morrow, at midnight, to the castle; you will enter by the gallery that looks to the west . . . . . " Pastophora wrote as I dictated, but I could see that it was against her will.

"Be punctual, Channa, for she who loves you will be waiting for you."

Her strength seemed now to desert her, and her hand fell heavily by her side, dropping the tablets, which fell to the ground.

"Go on, my daughter," I said, to give her courage, "go on, the signature alone remains now." This she traced with a trembling hand. I then took up what she had written, and examined it closely, when the thought came to me, whether it were really what I had dictated? Those characters were unintelligible to me, and she knew it; could she have baffled my plans by writing something else, and have asked him to fly instead of to come? I could not tell; I was, however, very careful to take away with the point of my finger a small spot, almost imperceptible, which one of her tears had left upon the polished ivory.

"Mother," she said then, taking my hand in hers. "Mother, Channa is my happiness, my life . . . my whole. You have him in your power . . . . but do not forget that if you harm him you will kill your daughter."

I trembled as I heard this, and a cold perspiration burst out on my forehead, for, above all things, I loved that child. I could not say another word, but left the room.

That very night, I sent the letter to Channa by means of Goso, my favourite slave, who was deaf and dumb, and whom I could be sure could not reveal to him the real sender of the tablets.

"Now, I have him in my power," I thought, "and to-morrow he will be in the deepest dungeon, ... that is to say if Pastophora has not deceived me and written something else, for then I was lost. . . . . " But I dared not think of this, although the idea prevented me from sleeping the whole of that long weary night.

III.

"Every crime
Has, in the moment of its perpetration,
Its own avenging angel—dark, misgiving,
An ominous sinking at the inmost heart."
COLERIDGE.

I PASSED the next morning and the whole of that day in the greatest anxiety. Would he come? I asked myself at every moment; would he be punctual? At last the long expected hour arrived, the sky was covered with clouds, and a storm was approaching; the heat was almost unbearable although we were on the mountains, and utter darkness prevailed excepting when the black clouds were burst asunder by the vivid flash of the fiery lightning.

When the appointed hour was approaching, I stole out of the castle, and, hidden behind some of the stone-work, I kept a watch over that particular gallery by which Channa was to enter it.

The imposing mass of the Daphadah stood like some enchanted fortress against the clouds, and the whole scene was enveloped in darkness as if by a funeral pall.

Presently I saw a man, who with a cautious step approached the western gallery, not far from

my hiding-place. It was he. . . . Channa! . . . my heart gave a bound and I breathed once more freely when I recognised him. It was hardly yet one hour after midnight; but on the horizon behind me began already to appear livid and ghastly lights, the heavy clouds too began to melt in rain, now that the wind had subsided, and Channa, I suppose fearing to be recognised by the light of the frequent lightning, let himself down the moat or ditch which surrounded the castle on the western side. Once there he continued his way, keeping close by the wall until the great tower of Daphadah rose before him. He then stopped, and with his mouth produced the curious noise peculiar to the owl. It was his accustomed signal, and the echo of this lugubrious note vibrated still on the night air when one of the windows of the western gallery was opened from the inside.

With an anxious eye I counted the number of windows to see whether the opened one was really the one at which my servant was stationed, by my orders, ready to receive my prisoner. The night was so dark that I could hardly count, but the position of this window left me no doubt it was Goso, my deaf and dumb slave, who had opened it. Now I no longer entertained any more misgivings, I was sure of my prey. I therefore went back to the castle, and entered it in silence, but with a lighter heart than when I had last passed that little door.

In the meanwhile from the window that Goso had opened descended a silken ladder, which had no sooner touched the ground than Channa gave it a strong pull to test its strength. He then ascended by it, and without meeting with any obstacle he soon climbed to the gallery, where he was received by my slave.

At first he was astonished to see this man instead of the young girl who on former occasions had received him, and conducted him to Pastophora's apartments; but it was too late to go back now, so he was obliged to follow him.

They thus traversed several courts and passages in silence, for, as I have told you before, Goso was deaf and dumb, until they reached a dark passage opening out of the large court, which they had no sooner entered than the door by which they had passed out was shut with a great noise, and almost at the same moment appeared a red light at the other end of the passage, which was produced by half-a-dozen soldiers, who with lighted torches in their hands were running towards Channa.

I believe it was then that he first began to suspect the truth, for, with a trembling voice, he inquired whom they were looking for.

"For you, Channa," answered the chief of them stretching forth his arm to seize him.

The unhappy man felt his very blood freezing in his veins. He could entertain no hope now,

for he well knew into whose hands he had fallen. Filled with bitter despair and driven almost to madness by the suddenness of the blow, he furiously drew his dagger and then wildly looked around to see if he could discover any place, however small, through which to escape. He saw nothing, however, but the blank wall on either side and the iron door, which defied all human force, inexorably shut behind him. With a cry of despair, and with all the force he could command, he then buried the dagger in his breast.

The wound, however, was not mortal, and he knew it, for he tried to repeat the blow, but before he could accomplish this, a dozen hands were upon him and carried him by main force down the long passage, accompanying their march with wild cries of ferocious joy, and horrible threats, and curses on their prisoner. Not that they had any reason to hate him, but that the wild beast predominated still in their rude natures, and their path in life was not the best calculated to teach them mercy. As they passed before the door of Pastophora's chamber, which had been locked by my order, they were suddenly detained by a cry of agony which all recognised.

The young girl pale as death had been watching by that door all the night, and when at last she had recognised her lover's voice, she had fallen fainting upon the marble floor of her room, for she knew his fate was sealed; and discovered,

although too late, that her heart had not deceived her when it opposed itself to her writing to him to fix this last and dreadful meeting.

Sometime later that night I glided hastily down that very passage followed by Goso.

I descended the steps at the end of it, and then continued through another corridor and down another staircase darker and narrower than the first, until I reached a small iron door that opened on to it on the right.

There I paused, and handed over to my faithful slave a large silken bag which he took in his hands.

Then taking out my dagger and pointing to the door before me, I made the sign of stabbing a man, and of cutting off his head which I also signified was to be put into the bag. Goso seemed perfectly to understand this pantomime, for a diabolical grin passed over his hideous features as he bowed his head in silent acknowledgment of my meaning.

I then returned up the steps to the court above, leaving the slave to perform his task alone.

IV.

"The power of love, in all ages, creates angels."
LONGFELLOW.

UNDER the old Indian castle of Daphada, there were several dungeons where unhappy prisoners used to be imprisoned for life during the reign of Singhana, the father of the present monarch of Kapila. Amongst these dungeons there was one situated just under the great court, and about fifty feet below it, where daylight could never penetrate. The very air of this dismal tomb in which living men alone were buried, was poisoned by the pestiferous atmosphere which prevailed, for the air was only renewed when the massive door, which served for entrance, was opened to admit a new victim or extract the corpse of a former one.

A little oil lamp of earthen ware, which hung suspended from the arched roof, gave evident proof by its half extinguished and flickering flame, of the small quantity of oxygen which could find its way through the long passage into this subterraneous chamber. This small flame, however, feeble and trembling as it was, served to distinguish in the uncertain shades it produced, the inert

form of a man who lay there upon the damp stones motionless as death itself.

But it was the body alone which was motionless and inert, the soul was active still, and lost in the deepest thought, and every now and then a groan, as of the profoundest despair, proceeded from the mouth of the man, who, but for this might well have been taken for dead.

It was Channa, who but a few hours before, had taken up his abode in that horrible dungeon of Dewadah, and who was now my prisoner. In his indescribable agony and despair he cursed the stones of the room, which he well knew was destined ere long to be his tomb; he bitterly cursed all the inhabitants of the fortress, he even cursed the love he still bore for Pastophora; doubted the power of Brahma himself; and, if the ardent desires of a man could have acted upon nature, the time-worn stones of the castle would have tottered and crumbled to atoms, and the entire structure would have fallen, burying under its ruins the victim and his betrayer, the cruel tyrant and all her slaves.

Channa possessed an indomitable and generous spirit, although at that time wild and uncultivated, but it might have led him to any glorious act of courage, abnegation, and love, or plunged him into the very lowest depths of crime and abomination. All human passions, from love eternal to hatred unbounded, from supreme pride to com-

plete abnegation of self, were rooted in his heart. In one word, Walter, you were then just what you are now, for your nature has not been changed, only you have triumphed long ago over all your bad passions; for continued education, and repeated trials and sorrows have developed in your spirit all its best points, completely eradicating the vicious and criminal tendencies peculiar to nearly all ignorant and fallen spirits, who are yet low in the scale of being, and will only attain perfection through a long series of repeated existences in this and other worlds as you have already done.

But I must return to our past, and forget, if possible, our happy present. Since Channa had been conducted to this subterraneous dungeon, he had lost all possible means of appreciating time. To judge from the world of thought, which had successively passed through his mind since he recovered from the insensibility which had followed his wound, he must have lived there for years. . . . his hair must be white by this time . . . but as he did not recollect having tasted any food, and yet knew that he existed, it was evident that his torments could not date from far back.

Which shows you, Walter, that time can only exist for those who depend on the daily routine of planetary life. You measure time by the revolutions of the earth, by the daily changes of night and day, and by the desires of your earthly body; but for those for whom there is neither day nor

night, for those who live independently of eating and drinking, time does not exist; for them time is but a word which has no reference to their being.

For the first time since his imprisonment Channa now heard a slight noise outside his prison, as that caused by a man's step upon a stone staircase. The noise approached, nearer and nearer, and he soon heard distinctly the marked steps of two persons outside the iron barred door. One of them seemed to retreat however, and the noise of his footsteps was soon lost in the distance, but the other stopped in front of his door, and soon caused it to move upon its hinges, which it did with a sepulchral tone.

The unhappy man now felt all the blood leave his head, and a cold sweat burst from his brow; the thought of death made him shudder, and yet, half-an-hour had not elapsed since he had tried to kill himself!

The door was now open before him, and a dark figure stood between him and the light. With an instinctive dread of death, which I suppose is natural to all mankind, he shrank back to the remotest corner of the dungeon, but the veiled figure advanced towards him with a firm step, which made his very blood freeze in his veins.

But suddenly the figure threw off the long mantle which had enveloped it, and fell on its knees before him, revealing to his astonished gaze the beautiful features of his love!

Yes, it was Pastophora herself who had come to save her lover.

"Oh, forgive me, Channa, forgive me," she cried, as soon as she was able to master her feelings, and find words that could be audible, "I have been horribly deceived; they forced me to write that accursed letter. Oh! forgive me." . . .

"And you believed them! . . . You sold me to my enemies. . . . Oh Pastophora! I would never have thought this of you," . . . and a cold deadly smile passed over his countenance.

"It was my mother . . . I was deceived by her. Ah! but I will save you . . . I will risk everything for thee, Channa. It is my fault that you are here at all, and it will be my business to save you. No, no; if I could not have found some means of saving you, I would have come here to die with you.". . .

Channa looked at her in mute admiration, for he could not understand so much love.

"Your feelings mislead you, Pastophora," he at last said. "It is too late now to think of liberty. We are in the power of Ananda, . . . of your mother! and . . . you well know what she is."

"She hates you . . . Channa, but you hate her too, and . . . who knows what you would not do if you had her in your power."

"If she were in my power—Ah! not even the love I bear you, would save her. I would imprison her in the deepest dungeon of my castle. I would kill her by slow degrees. I would cut off

her arms. I would tear out her eyes! . . . Ah, Mara and his demons would inspire me with untold tortures to destroy her life gradually, and make her suffer not only all she has made me suffer, but all she would have liked me to suffer," and a diabolical expression changed his handsome face into that of a demon.

Pastophora covered her head with her tunic not to see him, and shuddered in silence by his side.

A slight noise, which resounded in the vaulted passage like an echo of death, made them tremble.

"Fear nothing, Channa," said the maiden, at last, "it is only the man who is to conduct you out of Daphadah."

"Ah . . . . Pastophora, how good you are! but what have you done to win the cruel slaves of your mother to our side?"

"Oh, what do the means matter to you? besides I have not bought any of the slaves. I have not even tempted the fidelity of Lobnia, the chief of them; I have only induced Aloniah, the one who generally waits upon me, to conduct me to your prison with the pretext of bringing you some food, ... and by the same means you will effect your escape."

"How? I can hardly understand your plan."

"You will put on my dress, and covered over with this long veil, you will pass unnoticed by the soldiers outside."

"Instead of you?"

"Yes."

"And leave you in my place?"

"Yes."

"Oh, Pastophora, you are an angel!"

And the lovers sank into each others' arms.

At last, the young girl spoke again. "There is no time to lose. . . . . Come, come, ... here is my tunic. . . . . What do you fear?"

"Do you know the fate that awaits me?"

"Ah! yes, only too well, and it is for this that I want to save you."

"And you can propose to me this substitution. . . . . Don't you see, Pastophora, that if I accepted it, I should be unworthy of you who have so generously conceived it?"

"I am safe enough, Channa. All the wrath of Ananda would disappear before me. She would not hurt me, no, not for Nirwana. . . . . As for her slaves, do you think that they would dare to lift a finger against the daughter of their king?"

"But what you ask is a coward's act on my part; you yourself would despise me if I were to purchase my life with your liberty."

"No, no, if you love me, Channa, fly. Once in the fastnesses of the Himalayas, you will be safe; go straight to Kapila, see the king, and confess everything to him; he loves me, and will send soldiers to guard me, and, perhaps, who knows, he may even consent to our union."

"You sacrifice yourself for me, Pastophora!"

"I love you! But even if I did, what do I risk—the discovery of our love? Ah! even Suddhodana knows it, to our misfortune, and for this he sent us to this hideous castle."

"You are an angel!"

"Oh, lose no more time, or it will be too late; it is more than your existence; it is mine that I am asking from you."

Pastophora then removed her tunic and put it over Channa's head, who covered her with his; then she threw over him the long mantle which covered him completely from head to foot.

"Farewell now, dear love," she said, when this change of dress had been completed; "farewell, and let Brahm and all his angels protect you through the mountains."

"Pastophora, I will soon be back, ... but at the head of an army to claim you as my bride. . . . . Farewell!"

She buried her lovely face in his breast for one second, then she opened the door, and pushing him hastily out of the dungeon with all her force, she closed the door against him.

The door, in shutting thus violently, extinguished the little light, and Pastophora was left in darkness alone in the dungeon.

V.

"Oh, give me liberty!
For were ev'n Paradise my prison,
Still I should long to leap the crystal walls."
DRYDEN.

CHANNA was now out of the dungeon, and between him and his love was that accursed door, which he had supposed that death alone could open. But he was free—free, and who does not rejoice in liberty, especially when he has passed a whole night in a dungeon? In the joy of his heart he even forgot the love of Pastophora, who had sacrified her own liberty to obtain his. So selfish is undeveloped human nature!

Before him was a tall negro, dressed in a white tunic, who held in one hand the basket and water jar which contained the prisoner's meagre fare, and in the other the enormous keys of the subterranean dungeons.

Channa examined him from head to foot with one intense look which penetrated to the man's inmost thought, and then he asked him—

"Do you know who I am?"

"Channa, the favourite of our blessed prince Sakya."

"Do you promise to put me in safety outside this castle?"

"I promise to risk my life for that effect."

If this were true, he could ask no more of him, so it being too late now to go back, even had he desired to do so, he resolved to trust himself completely to the slave. He therefore promised him a large reward, and taking in his hand the basket of provisions, and placing on his head the water jar, which he tried to balance there as well as he could, in the fashion of the Hindoo girls, so as to be taken for one of them if possible.

"I am ready," he said, "show me the way, good Aloniah, and let Brahma protect us."

The black slave led the way in silence, lighting the damp and tortuous passages with the torch he held in his hand, which created behind them long dark shadows that might have been easily taken in those superstitious and ignorant times for the dark spirits of Mara, the angel of darkness, who followed their footsteps through the long and dreary corridors.

In this way they reached the bottom of the staircase by which the wounded Channa had been carried down some few hours before, as the dark spots of blood might have testified, which here and there marked the stone steps. When they had ascended this staircase, the guide with one of his knees opened another iron door which gave entrance to the large hall contiguous to the great court.

Here a new and brilliant scene burst upon

them. On suddenly emerging from the darkness, the glare of the light was at first so great that both men were obliged to shut their dazzled eyes, which soon, however, got accustomed to it, and then they were able to see the curious scene which met their view.

Half-a-dozen soldiers and a few slaves were assembled in this hall by my express command, to keep watch over the prisoner, but the night being cold and Channa quite safe, as they thought, they had got out some barrels of wine and at that moment were gaily enjoying this delicious but to them forbidden luxury.

Aloniah shut the door behind them, and with a sure but rapid step entered the hall, followed by Channa, who kept as much as he could in the shadow produced by the slave's body against the light of the torch which he carried in his hand.

Some of the soldiers approached them.

"What is the prisoner doing?" asked one.

"Does he eat?" said another.

"Does he drink?" added a third.

Aloniah answered tranquilly but without slackening his pace—

"He sleeps," and then continued his way in silence.

One of the soldiers more excited than his companions now approached Channa.

"And who art thou, my beautiful houri? I

could swear by Hamadava, the goddess of love, that I have seen thee before now."

He was going to take his hand when the negro interposed between them, saying—

"Leave my daughter alone, or I break your head. . . . Yes, by Siva, I break your head."

"I should like to see you do it . . . you slave," answered the soldier, whose head was not particularly steady.

"If it is your daughter," said another soldier, "let us see her. Is she black or white?"

Almost all the soldiers now came up to them, at least those who could get up from their seats, and formed a circle round Channa and the keeper.

"Let's see her face. . . . Let's take her veil off. . . . We wanted some amusement this evening. . . . I vouch she is not so pretty as my Gosa. . . . I vouch she is as frightful as her father. . . . Ah . . . Ah. . . . Ah," was shouted on all sides.

The situation was becoming very critical, and Channa would no doubt have been found out, if it had not happened that just at that moment the doors of the hall were thrown open, and Goso and I appeared in the entrance.

The soldiers retired to their places in silence, and I proceeded without noticing them to the iron door which gave access to the dungeons below. Goso remained a little behind, and with his bright penetrating eyes he looked at Channa from head to foot.

Aloniah who in the meantime had gained the opposite door whispered in his ear—

"Quick . . . Quick, if that man recognises you, we are lost . . . he is the very demon of Mara, that deaf and dumb slave."

Channa did not wait for this caution to be repeated; in one bound he was out of the hall, and his faithful companion had shut the door behind him.

Before the fugitives there was now a long passage open on one side, with large windows which gave light to the upper court. They hastened through it, but unfortunately the torch which alone could light the way before them was extinguished by the night air which came in through the open windows, and Channa and his companion were left in complete darkness.

Aloniah, however, knew all the ins and outs of the castle so well, that in less than ten minutes they breathed the purer air of the great court-yard. Channa had thrown down the basket and the water jar to run with greater ease, and now was the first to arrive at the side door which opened on to the terrace outside, but Aloniah came up to him in time and stopped him.

"That is not the way, we should be seen if we went out by that door, we must let ourselves down through one of the windows into the moat behind the great statue of Crishna."

They then went on again in silence all round

the court yard, keeping to the side where the moon, which now shone out, threw the deepest shadow, and when they at last arrived behind the sacred image, the slave produced a ladder of silk cord, and a sword which he had hidden beforehand, under the stone pedestal.

Aided by Channa he then tied the ladder to the iron frame of the window, and threw the other end outside. Before descending, Channa turned to his guide, and said, with moved tone,

"The service which you have this night done me is one of those which nothing can ever repay. I am yours from this hour, Aloniah, everything I possess is yours, what do you want?"

"Oh sir," said the poor slave, "do you dismiss me?"

"Are you not going to remain then in the castle?"

"If I did, sir, after this my mistress would bury me alive as sure as fate. Ananda is powerful and would never forgive me. I have saved you, Channa, will you not in your turn save the poor slave?"

"Yes, come with me, faithful Aloniah, and be my brother, you will bear witness of Ananda's cruelty to our lord the king."

Saying this Channa took the sword between his teeth, and hastily descended the ladder into the moat, where he was soon followed by Aloniah.

When they were in the open air, he looked back

upon the dismal fortress that had been destined to be his grave, and from which Pastophora's devotion alone had saved him, and with a cry of relief he exclaimed,

"Oh liberty! liberty! I have regained thee at last, and now tremble Ananda, for I am free!"

VI.

> "Through a long course of almost endless beings
> Have I, in sorrow, sought the great Creator.
> Now thou art found, oh great artificer!
> Henceforth my soul shall quit this home of sin,
> And from its ruins the glad spirit shall spring,
> Free from the fetters of all mortal births,
> And over all desires victorious."
>
> SAKYA MUNI.*

ONCE out of the castle of Daphadah, their escape was not very difficult.

The golden rays of morning began already to break in the eastern hemisphere, when at last they were out of sight of the fortress and its soldiers. Then they took to the mountains, and for the whole of that day they walked downwards towards the plain, but still keeping to the most unfrequented paths, so as not to be detected. In the first village they arrived at, they purchased a pair of horses that might carry them with greater speed out of the range of the Himalayas.

Here they held a council as to the course of conduct they had better adopt for the future. Channa wanted to return to Kapila and confess all to the king, throwing himself upon his mercy; but Aloniah proposed to join the Prince Sakya,

* Bhilsa Topes, 59.

who would easily forgive Channa's love, and save the object of his affections. And this was the plan they decided upon.

They therefore went straight to Bagagriha, the city where Sakya had at first fled to. But here they learnt that after remaining for some days with a celebrated Brahmin, who had seven hundred disciples, and practised the strictest laws of asceticism, he had departed towards Benares, disgusted with asceticism altogether. This was all they could gather at Bagagriha.

The truth was that Sakya's spirit was above all those mere material forms of worship. For some time he had surrendered himself into the keeping of the Brahmins; he had studied diligently, and through abstract meditation and contemplation of the divinity, as mirrored in his own pure mind, he had striven after content of soul and that perfect happiness he so bravely sought everywhere. Never did man more zealously pursue a given course than he did; but the long hoped-for happiness, the much-desired content, was as distant from him as before. For he was not a man who could pretend to feel what he did not feel even to deceive himself.

He had sat for hours and hours daily in silent meditation, according to the Brahminical rules; but he could not help perceiving that after all his efforts he was but acting a part which he knew did not suit him. "How can anyone, through

mere mechanical and ordained obedience, acquire that peace and blessedness which must flow freely out of the heart, or not at all?" "Must not the established routine of a church, and the stereotyped prayers of men, always remain foreign to the great soul who is in search of his God?"

Such were the questions Sakya or Sidharta (*one who has attained his aim*), as he was now called, asked himself every day; and such questions once started, as you know very well, Walter, can never be put down. He turned to his Brahmin brothers, like Luther to the monks in Erfurt, saying, "I have done all ye bade me do, but yet I have not found peace. Peace I will have, so now I must turn elsewhere." And this too, you must confess, was bravely done, and with the chance of success; for the next glory to that of dying for the truth, is that of candidly admitting our error as soon as we discover it; which is but rarely done upon your world, especially in religious matters.

He then left the Brahmins at Bagagriha, and ascending the river Nairaujana, he came to the Uruwela forests, where there were plenty of quiet spots suitable as an abode for those who lead an ascetic life. Rich verdure, noble trees, and lovely flowers were all suggestive of enlightened thoughts. There was abundance of cool water in pools close at hand, and not far off was the river Nairaujana, in whose clear waters

thousands of fish and tortoises might be seen disporting. The advantages of the situation were completed by its being sufficiently near to a village for convenience in seeking alms, and yet not so near as to be disturbed by its proximity.*

Five Brahmins from Bagagriha followed him to this deserted spot to join him in practising a severe course of asceticism. So in this way he surrendered himself to fasting and self-torture of every kind, and in order that his meditations might not be interrupted, he gradually reduced his daily allowance of food to an extremely small quantity; he slept upon the rocks, never washed himself, and in the course of six long years, he reduced himself to a fearful condition of physical exhaustion. This was according to the old Brahminical idea that the body is but an evil burden, and as such, ought to be kept under, by means of low diet, long fasting, watching, and flagellation, so that it should not, through passion and appetite, plunge the soul into actions unbefitting its greatness! Vain and ignorant children! they attributed all the evils of this life to their bodies, their pride never permitting them to see that the real evil was in their souls, in their low, undeveloped and animal-minded spirits, not in the body which is only an envelope that can be put on or off at will!

But Sakya was loftier-minded than the ideas

* "The Wheel of the Law." H. Alabaster.

his time had attained to; here again he arrived at the same conclusion, that peace was not to be obtained through fasting and flagellation. The different lives of Buddha which have been written since Sakya's death, are full of wondrous miracles and visions; there is one which I cannot refrain from relating to you, my dear Walter:—

"While the great master was in the Uruwela woods, the archangel Indra brought him a three-stringed guitar, and sounded it at a short distance. One string, too tightly strained, gave a harsh and unpleasant sound; the second, not strained enough, had no resonance; the third, moderately stretched, gave forth the sweetest music. Having thus done, the thousand-eyed angel returned to his abode. This is, according to Indian fable, what decided Sakya to renounce asceticism; for, having pondered on the meaning of this vision, he determined to draw a lesson from the string moderately stretched, and in future to practise asceticism with moderation." *

So he quitted the green banks of the Nairaujana for the sacred stream of Ganges, and took up his residence in the holy city of Benares. The five men who had joined with him in his austerities, and still believed in their infallible power, remained in the forests. "See," they say, "he takes milk, sings and bathes; he sleeps, and enjoys life. Such a glutton and sensualist will never

* Alabaster's "Wheel of the Law."

attain the Supreme Wisdom; let us, therefore, leave him. The son of a king will never make a good Brahmin." So they let him go alone to the holy city, for he at last had become satisfied that their road led not to peace and wisdom.*

All this had happened while we were living at Dewadah, so that when Channa and his companion arrived at Bagagriha, they there learnt for the first time the change that had come over the prince's mind. The most curious and wonderful legends and anecdotes were current among the common people, who, as in all Eastern nations, were exceedingly superstitious; for races, as individuals in their infancy, attribute to every occurrence they cannot explain a supernatural origin, and see in every phenomenon of nature the unseen hand of demons and angels.

And no wonder that in this instance they should imagine a supernatural agency working unseen in their very midst. Here was a young prince who, breaking through all the established laws of Hindoo caste, had become a Brahmin, an ascetic, a mendicant, a young prince who of his own accord had quitted his capital and his palaces for the desert, and had left all the comforts of life to embrace that of a pilgrim—this is strange enough. But lo, he soon gets tired of this sort of life, and dares to declare in the face of the world that their whole faith is a mistake, that the Brahmins were deceived,

* Dr Perfitt's Life of Sakya.

and that happiness and heaven (Nirwana) can never be found in their creed. No wonder, then, that the common people should believe him tempted by devils, and should draw pictures of him fighting with demons.*

Channa, who was still suffering from the effects of the wound he had inflicted upon himself the night he had been taken prisoner, could now only travel by slow stages, and every day as he approached the banks of the Ganges he heard more and more wonderful stories about Sakya and his miracles; how Mara, the prince of the demons, had offered him universal domain if he would only worship him, but that he was not to be won over by any offer of wealth or dominion, and would not submit himself to the direction of one who had deliberately set himself in opposition to the Almighty.

The Buddhists are very proud to this day of a triumph, which they believe could not have been gained by any mere man. Evidently it was difficult for them to conceive of a human being resisting the temptation to become rich and powerful, a weakness so peculiar to human nature. But they, who view Sakya as a god, are not seemingly aware of the absurdity lurking in the supposition that a god, as they say Sakya was, could have experienced any difficulty

* See Prinsep's Bengal Asiatic Journal, vol. vii., p. 812, for an account of the great fight between Sakya and Mara.

in the matter. But when such subjects are advanced, there is no thought exercised by any who are believers, for faith is of course an enemy to reason in all religions, and its followers accept the popular notions as lying beyond the pale of inquiry, and within the realm of blind faith. The Buddhists do not dare doubt these legends any more than the Christians doubt the truth of the not less wonderful narratives relating to the temptation of Jesus. But it is not of much avail to raise a debate upon the absurdities involved in them, because they who believe in such doctrines at all are incapable of any rational discussion, and arguments will therefore never convince them of their utter absurdity.

Channa and his faithful companion arrived at last at Benares, where their first inquiry was for Sakya.

He was well known there, the great Buddha as he was called, and he frequently discoursed with the crowds of people who gathered together desiring to hear his wonderful sermons, for he was undoubtedly the first out of the Brahminical caste who had pronounced outdoor sermons in India. That he was most popular, there could be no doubt, for his doctrines were well calculated to please the populace. He was the first to preach human equality and the brotherhood of all men, that doctrine which six centuries later was developed in Galilee by Jesus. He was the first to strike

boldly at the foundation of the whole Brahminical system of caste and birth-born inferiority. He was a thorough patriot, who smote hard and home against the evils of his age, neither condescending to pay respect to wealth, station, or power, nor speaking low when boldness became a duty.

No wonder then that he had become so popular in the great Metropolis of Brahminical learning and Indian civilisation. His doctrines were in the mouth of everyone and his commandments were household words:—

1. Thou shalt not kill.
2. Thou shalt not steal.
3. Thou shalt not commit adultery.
4. Thou shalt not lie.
5. Thou shalt not drink any intoxicating liquors.
6. Desire not the death of your enemy.
7. Avoid the use of injurious speech and foul words.
8. Covet not another's wealth.
9. Abhor conversation which admits detraction.
10. Be not suspicious.*

Of course the Brahmins hated him, because he exposed all their secret weakness and denounced their actions; and they mocked him, as the Pharisees mocked Jesus, because he received into the number of his disciples miserable men

* Upham's Sacred Books, iii. 158.

who were rejected by the first classes of Indian society. But he, like Jesus, contented himself with replying, "My law is a law of mercy for all." One day the Brahmins were scandalised at seeing a daughter of an inferior caste of Tchandala received as a religious woman. Sakya said —"There is not between a Brahmin and a man of another caste the difference that there is between gold and a stone, between light and darkness. The Brahmin, in fact, did not proceed out of the ether or the wind. He did not cleave the earth to appear in the daylight, like the fire that issues from the wood of the Arani. The Brahmin was born of a woman, like the Tchandala; where then dost thou see the cause that should render the one noble and the other vile? The Brahmin himself, when he is dead, is abandoned as an object vile and impure, precisely like a person from another caste; where then is the difference?" *

At last Channa met his prince after nearly eight years of separation. He met him for the first time in the great temple of Siva, where Sakya had been preaching and speaking in parables, as he often did. The joy of both friends was very great, for Channa loved his prince above all things.

"Thou seest I was right, Channa," said Sakya. "I prophesied that thou wouldst at last come

* Abbé Huc's Chinese Empire, p. 394.

back to me, tired of the vicissitudes of life, disgusted with the pleasures of the harem, and lo! here you are! here you come to me as the stray lamb comes to his shepherd who has been lamenting his loss."

"Ah! would to Brahm, Sakya, I had never left thee. . . . Would to God I had accompanied my master that fatal day when we parted for the last time by the river Anoma."

Channa then told him all that had happened to him during the last six years, his love for Pastophora, my hatred, and his imprisonment, ending with his deliverance by my daughter, and his flight from Daphadah. "This, oh prince! has been my life; I have been the victim of that woman. Ananda has been my curse. Now all that remains to me is vengeance, vengeance . . . and then . . . ."

"And then what? Nay, friend, forget Ananda, and all her crimes, they will be punished enough ere long; Brahm has not placed thee in the world to avenge thy wrongs, or to be the executor of justice for him. He is all-powerful, and he knows better than we do what is good for us. Forgive thy enemies, and Brahm will forgive thee. Forget Ananda and her beautiful daughter, they are but ties which would bind thee to earth; forget them, and follow me to Nirwana."

"And how shall I keep from evil? how shall

I ever attain Nirwana's peace? I who am but a miserable sinner of the earth, earthy?"

"Know thou, that to keep from the company of the ignorant, and choose that of learned men; to give honour to whom it is due; to choose a residence proper to our station, and adapted for procuring the common wants of life; and to maintain a prudent carriage—are means of preserving a man from evil doings. The comprehension of all things that are not evil, the exact knowledge of the duties of our station, and the observance of modesty and piety in our speech, are four excellent modes of renouncing wickedness.

"By ministering a proper support to parents, wife, and family; by purity and honesty in every action; by alms-deeds; by observing the divine precepts; and by succouring relations—we may be preserved from evil. By such a freedom from faults, that not even the inferior part of our nature manifests any affection for them; by abstinence from all intoxicating drink; by the continual practice of works of piety; by showing respectfulness, humility, and sobriety before all; and gratitude to our benefactors; and, finally, by listening often to the preaching of the word of God—we overcome evil inclinations, and keep ourselves free from sin. Docility in receiving the admonitions of good men; frequent visits to priests; spiritual conferences on the divine laws;

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patience, frugality, modesty; the literal observance of the law; keeping before our eyes the four states into which living creatures pass after death; and meditation on the happy repose of Nicban—these are distinguished rules for preserving man from wickedness.

"That intrepidity and serenity which good men preserve amid the eight evils of life; (abundance and want, joy and sorrow, popularity and abandonment, censure and praise;) their freedom from fear and inquietude; from the dark mists of concupiscence; and, finally, their insensibility to suffering—these are four rare gifts, that remove men far from evil. Therefore, oh Channa! imprint well upon your heart the thirty-eight precepts I have just delivered. Let them be deeply rooted there, and see that thou puttest them in practice."*

* This speech was really delivered by Buddha, and gives a very fair idea of his doctrines and style. See Malcolm's "Travels in Hindustan," i. pp. 298, 299.

VII.

"Vengeance has no foresight."
NAPOLEON I.

BUT I must return to my poor daughter, Pastophora; whom we left in the subterranean dungeons of Daphadah.

There she lay unconscious of time and events; she had not even perceived the want of light. All her thoughts were with Channa. She followed him in her mind through all the intricate passages of the castle, out into the court-yard, and then, out of the castle altogether, through the solitary passes of the Himalayas, to her beloved home at Kapila.

The dangers which her lover ran had made her forget her own, and she had not perceived the noise of footsteps outside, until that of a key turning in the lock of the door of the dungeon came to disturb her train of thought.

The moment had come when she would have to confess all, the fatal moment when Ananda, in all the fury of her baffled vengeance, would pronounce over that fair head the curse of a mother, perhaps the sentence of death. But what was

even this compared to the pleasure of having saved Channa's life?

It was then that she first perceived the want of light, and a nervous tremor ran through her frame; but what had she to fear from darkness? When the door would open, floods of light from the outside would inundate the cell, and even if not, the very first word she uttered would tell the truth to whomsoever entered her prison.

The noise of the key had already subsided, and was now replaced by a dumb grating sound, produced by the hinges of the door. This noise was soon silent, however, and ended with the unmistakable noise which is produced by a door when shut suddenly. The darkness remained the same, silence was as profound as before, and yet, she was certain that she was not alone in her dungeon.

Her hair stood on end, an overwhelming fear seemed to prevent her very heart from beating.

She knew that something was going to happen, something dreadful—What? She dared not think.

Suddenly she felt upon her foot the pressure of a hand. An electric shock seemed to thrill through her, for she got up, and, with her trembling hand, pushed back her black hair, as if she thought it was that which prevented her from seeing her companion. At last she found breath

to give a cry, a cry of horror, in which was expressed all the anguish, all the misery, of her situation.

"Who art thou? . . . Who art thou?" she cried, "Who dares touch Pastophora, the daughter of the king?"

But instead of an answer, she only heard the sound of the footsteps beside her.

"Who art thou?" she cried again, at the top of her voice, "I am Pastophora, thy king's daughter." . . .

But she could say no more,—a hand, strong as iron, took hold of her head, and placed her in a position in which she could hardly breathe.

Pastophora had not suspected that Channa's executioner would be deaf and dumb!

Deprived of all motion, and held with a vice of iron in the midst of the floods of blood which rushed to her ears, she heard the noise which is produced by a dagger when taken out of its sheath.

"Oh my God, have pity on me, Brahm! . . . Brahm! . . . dost thou not hear me. I am Pastophora . . . Ananda's daughter . . . Oh! stop . . . stop! . . . canst thou not recognise the voice of thy mistress?" . . .

She felt on her throat the edge of the cold steel, which made her burst into one last cry of despair . . . then a supreme pain which lasted for two seconds, . . . and . . . nothing more.

Goso extracted the dagger, and a stream of hot blood flew to his face.

The Nubian's nostrils inhaled its nauseous odour with all the avidity of a beast of prey, and he stooped down to have a full enjoyment of it. The body, which yet writhed under his grasp of iron, was getting colder and colder every second, and the blood flowed with less violence.

Then Goso took a short sword in his hand, and buried it deep in his victim's throat. The fine blade soon triumphed over it, and divided that fair head from its body.

The slave then raised it in his cruel hands, and carefully placed it in the silken bag I had given him for this purpose. And with this precious charge under his arm, he once more stepped out of the subterraneous dungeon.

VIII.

"If there be aught
Surpassing human deed, or word, or thought,
It is a mother's love!"

SPADARA.

IN the farthest corner of my apartment, alone with my dreadful thoughts, I waited impatiently the coming of Goso.

My vengeance was at hand, I had him in my power. . . . but I could not breathe freely yet; for a silent misgiving of the heart told me not to trust too much in future events. The slightest murmur in the long suite of open apartments, which formed the ground floor of the castle of Daphadah, made me tremble on the cushions upon which I lay, with anxious eyes fixed upon the door before me.

My existence seemed to depend upon my revenge; I lived but in my long thought of vengeance, and that constant dream of my dreary existence was at last going to be realized. In one moment more I should behold that head which had made me suffer so much, and which would then be powerless to plot against me more; but one

moment more to wait, and I should be able to spit upon those detested features; for I doubted not that Goso would do his duty. But why trouble you, dearest Walter, with the miserable state of my heart? To picture it to you it would be necessary to return to hell, for dark as hell was my passion, fiery as hell my revenge.

I have often thought of that dreadful night, often and often, whilst traversing the splendid realms of light and happiness which exist in other worlds. Often and often have I thought of that distant existence of my spirit, and thanked God with all my heart for hiding its past miseries from me, while incarnated in the same world, but under circumstances so different, which made my being seem a totally different one.

Oh, happy, happy it was for me that I could forget that dreadful past. For the recollection of that former condition might have prevented me from improving the present. What need has the grown up man to remember the miserable, painful, tearful stages through which he arrived at his present knowledge? What we are is what matters, not what we have been, and therefore I thank God, who in his supreme wisdom has permitted me to begin life over again, by letting the veil of forgetfulness drop between me and my past.

Now, when I choose to recall it, I can see myself over again, reclining in a cross-legged

position, upon the embroidered silks from Cashmere, with more than an Inferno of Dante burning in my heart. There I see that miserable Indian woman, wicked, ignorant, and vile, whose heart is full of bad passions, whose very existence is but the misery of her fellow beings; I see that Ananda, and I see myself as I am now, and lift up my purified heart to the throne of the Almighty, and thank him again and again, for without his continued aid, oh my Walter, I could never have become what I now am from what I was.

But a heavy step in the gallery outside came to disturb my anxious watch, and the black figure of the Nubian appeared in the archway of the door.

His white dress was in disorder, and bloody marks here and there told only too plainly that the deed was done, and that my vengeance was complete. In his hand he held the silken bag, the very bag I had given him, but its folds were rounded, and one look sufficed to show me that it was no longer empty.

I advanced, and with a sign of the head commanded him to place his hideous burden upon the ground by my side.

His eyes met mine, those tiger-like eyes which yet make me shudder as I think of them through all these ages, but my gaze was firm, as firm as his; and lowering his head, and crossing his

arms upon his breast before me, the slave left the room. Left me, left me alone! alone with my vengeance . . . . The head upon the ground before me, was the head of my rival, the head of my enemy. . . . At last, at last the fixed idea of all my dreary days of anxiety was accomplished . . . It was the realization of the horrible nightmare of my long night of insomnolency.

I placed the earthen vase which contained the light near the bloody bag, and my fingers trembled as I touched the strings. But I nerved them to be firm, and it was with a sure hand that I soon extended them, and opened the bag.

A diabolical smile passed over my face, as I buried my hands in it, and brought out the yet warm head which lay inside it. I then placed it upon that spot of the carved ivory table on which the light of the lamp threw its brightest rays.

And I fixed my eyes upon the pale and agonized features of that fair head.

A flash of lightning seemed to burst before me. . . .

I stepped back with all my hair on end, and outstretched arms.

Was it a dream . . . an illusion . . . what?

That head . . . that head. No, it could not be my daughter's. That of the only creature I had ever loved. . . . It could not be.

Such a punishment would have been superior to all my faults of a woman or even of a demon.

For . . I loved Pastophora; she was my daughter, my child . . my *only* child, and the tie which links mother and child is the first which binds us to humanity. The maternal love is the first felt, the first experienced, aye, and the most enduring. A father may turn his back on his child, brothers and sisters may become enemies, wives may desert and betray their husbands, husbands their wives, lovers may end by hating each other; but a mother's love endures through all,—it begins with the birth of the child and does not even end with its death. It is the first real passion we feel, it is the last that quits us. What woman can forget the infant smiles that once filled her bosom with rapture almost divine, the merry laugh, the joyful shout, the innocent tears of her first-born babe? Ah! it was indeed a woman who first dreamt of heaven! And she saw it first in her child's blue eyes. A love, whose root is in death, whose fruit must be in eternity, had filled my whole being. I loved Pastophora, aye, and I could never have believed how much; I could never have imagined the extent of my love, . . . until that night . . . that night, ah! when it was too late! I then learnt that a mother's love is neither to be chilled by selfishness, nor daunted by danger, nor weakened by worthlessness, nor stifled by anger, nor conquered by hate. The lioness loves her new-born cubs, the serpent takes

care of, and jealously guards her eggs, the tigress nurses and fondles her little ones, and even Ananda loved her child; perhaps more through instinct than heart, more as a beast than as a woman! But yet material as that love was, it was love nevertheless; and as such, holy, simple, and divine in its nature, if not in its beginning, for motherly love is the emblem of all we can imagine of fidelity and truth; it is the blessed devotion that watches over and guards us in the cradle, and whose sweet influence we experience all through life, and whose loss we so long and bitterly lament on the grass-grown grave, in which our mother moulders in dust and ashes. Pastophora was my child! . . . . . Oh, that is enough to express all the agony of horror I felt in my cruel heart.

I stood firm and erect by the side of that table, but my eyes were shut and I feared to open them anew. While I kept them closed I could indulge in the hope that it was all a dream, an halucination of my troubled head.

But this anxiety was worse than the reality. I walked to the table and took the bloody head in both my hands . . . .

It was true . . . . it was Pastophora's head.

I felt a cold shiver, as if of death, run through my frame to the very marrow of my bones.

The blood stopped flowing. I could not speak, I could not shed a tear!

But I dropped upon the marble floor of the apartment with that head still in my hands. I fell as falls a corpse, and I knew no more.

This was my vengeance, my long-dreamt-of revenge!

IX.

> "Between two worlds life hovers like a star
> 'Twixt night and morn."
>
> BYRON.

Walter. "Can that be true, my Conchita? Can that horrible event really have taken place? And can you, my angel, have been the heroine?"

Conchita. "Yes, my Walter, it is but too true. Do you hate me for it?"

Walter. "Hate you, my love? Can love turn to hate? Ah, no; I pity Ananda and I forgive her . . . . but I love Conchita."

Conchita. "Can you now understand your mother's love? That same Pastophora who so loved you twenty-four centuries ago, bore you in her bosom in this, your present existence, and it is to her you once more owe your life.

"Some suppose that re-incarnation would destroy all family ties. How absurd this objection appears to us who see both sides of life! The history of our past, which I am telling you serves to prove the fallacy of this ignorant supposition. Re-incarnation extends, but does not destroy family ties, for parentage is generally founded upon former affection. The ties that unite the members of a family are not carnal; love

can never die, and as love is attractive and not repellant, the love that we feel towards each other draws us together again and again. It is true we extend the circle of the objects of our love, as we are brought into connection with others; this cannot be otherwise. A succession of material existences re-unites ties that existed in the past, hence arises the mysterious sympathy that we sometimes feel for those we think we have never met before. The duties of brotherhood and charity are augmented and rendered more sacred by the thought that the neighbour, the dependant, or the friend may have been a still nearer connection in the past. We should always be kind and good to all, and this view of life must make us more gentle and more charitable to all who surround us.

"But enough of this for to-night; morning advances and I must depart once more from your side."

Walter. "You cannot know, my dearest wife, how anxious I am to hear the ending of your sad tale."

Conchita. "*Mañana es otro dia*, as they say in Spain. To-morrow I will end the story of that distant existence in which we met for the first time. For to-night farewell, for my life hovers between two worlds, 'twixt night and morn."

NIGHT THE FIFTH.

"Through many, various, oft-repeated births,
I've run my course; still seeking, but in vain,
The Builder of the house framed by desire.
Painful and wearying are repeated births.
But now, House-Builder! thee I've found at last;
No house, henceforward, canst thou build for me;
For, having quenched the flames of low desire,
Rafters and ridge-pole I have broken down.
My soul from earthly life has gained release,
And entered blest Nirwana's glorious peace."

SAKYA MUNI.

I.

"Labour with what zeal we will,
Something still remains undone
Something uncompleted still
Waits the rising of the sun."
LONGFELLOW.

Conchita. "My dear husband, as I promised last night, here you have me once more by your side, and I see you have not forgotten your Conchita."

Walter. "Forgotten you! You my angel wife! Could that be possible? Ah, if you knew my love, how hollow now and empty are to me all the joys the world can offer, and all the pleasures of society! The earth is hell to me without you; you alone are my guiding star. Oh, if I could but fly to you, my angel, and follow you through those heavenly regions of eternal bliss! Oh wait, darling, wait, do not fly from me so soon, help me through this world of pain, and you who have reached the heavenly goal, look down upon me still, and guide me with your angel hand to the heights of a better world, where we two, as equals, may once more meet, and be united as one for evermore!"

Conchita. "You have a mission yet to perform

upon earth, Walter; the duration of your earthly pilgrimage is not in your power, but in God's hands, and you may be sure that He knows what is best for us.

"But I must finish the history of our past, for I want you to understand, to its full extent, by what near ties we two have been united through the ages."

Walter. "Yes; do go on, oh my love! I am most anxious to know our past; oh if I could but remember it. . . . . ! But then I would not need you to inform me of it. Perhaps it is best as it is."

Conchita. "Listen then, oh husband, to what we once were.

For nearly a week after this horrible catastrophe I was in a delirious state, unconscious of everything around me, insensible to all other emotions. Pastophora's death had been too sudden and unexpected a blow—a blow which my constitution could hardly recover. But it was not only my daughter's death that troubled me. Channa had escaped! I never could forget this; he, my enemy, doubly so now since Pastophora's death, was free! He had, no doubt, gone to Kapila; there he would see the king, who, in his anger, ... God knows what he would do with me. He never loved me. No, Suddhodana never loved me; the only influence I had over him was

through his daughter. She was the only being that could have sheltered me from his anger, and she was gone!

What would he say when he would come to Daphadah and find her gone? What would he say, and, oh God! what could *I* say? What would not his fury be when he learnt that I had murdered her, that I was the sole cause of her death?

No, I would not stand his anger, I could not; I would fly from Daphadah, let him find the castle empty should he come, and let the walls tell him the dreadful tale. Let those dreary walls speak to him and reveal their awful mystery. I would fly and never return; that fortress was my sepulchre, my living tomb, a constant object of dread and remorse too horrible to endure.

Since that fatal night, it had grown a hell for me; I could not be alone, no, not in its most retired chamber; invisible forms haunted me, voices of death sounded in my ears; Mara and all his angels had invaded the place, and driven me almost to despair. Was it remorse? was it fear? I could not tell; but out of the castle I would fly; in it I could no longer sleep; the deserted peaks of the Himalayas would be preferable to those dreary chambers, and those eternal and invisible beings which haunted them.

I escaped, then, one night when all my slaves

were asleep, I quietly stole out of the castle, and never again returned. I had not made any plan of escape, I did not know where to direct my steps, once out of the fortress and its surroundings; I walked for days down the slopes of the mountains, through one pass and another, resting at night when my weary feet could carry me no longer, in some lonely monastery, or in some shepherd's still more lonely hut. Thanks to Eastern hospitality refuge and shelter was never refused me, although, in some places, I could get nought else. But I did not want food; a little rice, a banana, or a mango would suffice for a whole day's nourishment.

I was rich; I had taken with me from Dewadah all the valuables I could possibly carry upon me, and especially the jewels which the king had at different times presented to Pastophora and which were of no mean value; these I intended to sell as soon as I could find an opportunity.

One afternoon, when the sun was setting upon the ice-clad peaks of the west, I distinguished the plain below. It was the end of the Himalayas. The plains of Oude were stretched out before me, and beyond them lay the fertile valley of the Ganges inviting me towards the sacred river with its evergreen shores.

From that moment my plan was decided. I would go to the banks of the Ganges, keep clear of Nepaul and Kapila, and fly to that part of

India where the anger of Suddhodana could not reach me.

I purchased a horse and a slave at my last resting-place, and once out of the mountains my journey became comparatively easy. Benares with its thousand temples and marble palaces was before me, fair visions of future happiness and splendour burst once more upon me as I traversed that glorious region, where God seemed to have excelled Himself in the beauty and profusion of His creation.

As I advanced towards the holy city, I heard more and more wonderful descriptions of its magnificence and splendour. And coupled with these I also heard extraordinary legends of a certain Gotama Buddha who lived there and worked the most wonderful miracles. But what was not my surprise when one day I found out that this supernatural being, this Gotama Buddha, was no other than our Prince Sakya, Maia's son. My astonishment knew no bounds, for, as you know, I had lived for the last ten years a secluded life among the mountains, and I had therefore heard nothing of what was going on in the rest of the world.

These startling news made me at first hesitate, and pause in the carrying out of my plans. Sakya was my enemy, he had always been so, and I had strong reason to believe that he suspected something of the real cause of his mother's death. But then, if I did not go to Benares, where else

could I go? Sakya since he had commenced his new mission, was separated from his father; they had quarrelled; perhaps after all therefore he was the best person to defend me from the king's anger. "Suddhodana's enemies must needs be Sakya's friends," I said to myself. "At all events I would try, I could risk nothing by trying, and if I failed, I still had the Brahmins, who favoured all those who opposed the young Buddha, and would no doubt receive me with open arms.

"Amongst so many different powers all in opposition to one another, it will be strange indeed if I do not find some one to aid me."

II.

"Time destroys the speculations of men, but it confirms the judgment of nature."—CICERO.

AT last, after many days of a troublesome journey, I arrived at Benares where new misfortunes awaited me.

My first enquiries were of course for Sakya; he was there, preaching and propagating his new doctrines of love to all men, and accompanied by his disciples, the principal of whom I learnt were Anando, Sariputra, Moggalama, and Channa. This intelligence filled me with dismay. Channa then was here with him, he had arrived before me, and no doubt had, ere this, revealed all that had happened at Daphadah, to the prince.

I had no chance left me now, and I must accustom myself to think of Sakya as of my bitterest enemy.

I watched him through the streets and the temples where he always repaired, surrounded by his numerous disciples, and the devoted crowd of admirers that followed him everywhere. I traced his footsteps from one part of the city to the other, across those magnificent temples of early Indian art, which were so soon to be effaced from the

face of the earth. For those glorious structures on the banks of the Ganges which reflected their colossal masses upon the limpid waters of the holy river, have long ere this mouldered in decay. Such are the sure effects of time!

Cities built by men are destined to endure for a time, and then to fall into decay. Babylon the mighty; Nineveh, Carthage, exist no longer; even their ruins have disappeared, and have mingled with the fine sand of the desert; but still their glory is not lost, still the civilization they inaugurated lives in the minds of men, they have done their work, and have contributed to make our present generation what it is. Their past has given origin to our present, their learning to our learning, their art to our art. For if it is true that one city falls in course of time, it is also true that another, and a more magnificent one, rises from its ruins, even as the phœnix is supposed to rise from its ashes, and as Sir Humphrey Davy truly remarked: Time is almost a human word, and change entirely a human idea; in the system of nature, we should rather say progress than change. The sun appears to sink in the ocean in darkness, but it rises in another hemisphere; the ruins of a city fall, but they are often used to form more magnificent structures, as at Rome. But, even when they are destroyed, so as to produce only dust, nature asserts her empire over them; the vegetable world rises in constant youth, and, in a

period of annual successions, through the labours of man, provides food, vitality, and beauty upon the wrecks of monuments which were once raised for purposes of glory, but which are now applied to objects of utility.

The Indian civilization may be said to be at an end, but the European has taken its place, and the grand-daughter of Hindoo learning may yet regenerate the ancestress of all civilization.

Through those fair valleys of the Godavery, Gungra, and Ganges, which were once the cradle of all the arts and sciences of the old world, now run the steam locomotives of the railway ; and the wires of the electric telegraph traverse the whole continent from the island of Elephanta to the coasts of Coromandel, from Ceylon to Thibet.

But I must not let imagination carry me away from my subject. It is true that when I cast my eyes upon the Indian peninsula, from this system, I see it such as it is, the great colony of a mighty nation, but when I travel into space, and direct my gaze towards it from the remote regions of stellar space, I once more behold India as it was twenty-four centuries back, when the great Buddha preached his doctrine of peace and good-will upon the green banks of the sacred Ganges ; I once more see the splendid seat of Brahmin learning piled up in all its ancient magnificence, on the north side of the river, which is in this place exceedingly broad, and surrounded by high banks on

either side,—upon the same site which the older city of Kasi once occupied.

Benares was then very large, and counted hundreds of houses, mostly of a great height. Nearly in the centre of it was the Great Temple, rising some 250 feet over the level of the river, which the Emperor Ahrungzebe has since then destroyed to build in its place the Mahomedan mosque which to-day occupies the old site. Thus temples succeed to temples, as faith succeeds to faith, and one creed is in the course of ages replaced by another creed, even as one temple is replaced by another.

Benares presented a most beautiful appearance from the water. On either side of the river, rising to a great height, were innumerable flights of marble steps which served as entrances to temples, palaces, and landing places; and above these rose, in artistic confusion, one over the other, the numerous turrets of temples and pagodas from the Great Temple of Brahm to that of Visha. Temples which to-day lie in mouldering ruins, the effects of Mahomedan intolerance and Christian barbarism.

Several beautiful temples also embellished the banks of the river, preceded by gauts or flights of steps, and surrounded by green groves, which presented a cool aspect during the enormous heat of the hot months. Such was Benares, 600 years before the present era,—a splendid capital,

the seat of learning and art, the true metropolis of the Eastern world.

But those were wild, barbarous times; the cradle of a new civilization—ah, yes! but the epoch of crime and vice. Humanity was young then; men but mere children upon the globe,—mere children, blinded by their passions, and unrestrained by any laws of religion or of science. Those were indeed wild times, in which the most wicked was the most admired, and the barbarous conqueror carried everything before him.

But Sakya had come to improve their morals, and give them a new standard of goodness, and a new faith, the foundation of a new and a better civilization; the era of a new regeneration had begun, and a new and loftier revelation was about to commence for the world. Sakya, the divinely inspired Master, was the first to batter down the old, and build up a new faith, he was the first to stand up for the truth, the first to raise his voice against the immoral and brutal customs of those barbarous times.

This was the mighty work of Sakya, and in this respect he might be compared to Jesus, that he came to proclaim the reign of God's spiritual kingdom on earth. The higher and richer classes in Benares, as those in Jerusalem five centuries later, laid heavy burdens upon the backs, and even upon the hearts of the poor; burdens which, as the Bible tells us, they would

not touch themselves with the tips of their fingers, and this he also denounced as bad enough to be called unpardonable. For the rich luxuries of the mighty the poor were compelled to toil, as they still this day toil, hopelessly; and Sakya, as Christ, could not see this without bitterness of soul. He was tender-hearted, having in his nature a large share of that womanly sensibility, which caused him to shrink not merely from inflicting pain himself, but also from witnessing its infliction by others. Hence it was that to contemplate all this heavy toil and unrewarded labour was sad to him; his better feelings rose in rebellion against it; and although he did not stand forth prompting men to take up arms to avenge the cause of injured poverty, yet with greater success he attacked the doer of evil, and won large advantages for the poor. These poor, too, could hardly believe what had happened. What! were they then not born to sweat and suffer under heavy loads? Were they not intended by heaven to be as bondsmen and bondswomen unto the Rajas and others who ruled and possessed the land? Sakya said, No! But we can readily understand that many rather wished than believed it were true.* No wonder, then, that he was the idol of the common people, that in

* Dr Perfitt's "Life and Teachings of Sakya;" "The Pathfinder," vol. v.

the course of a few years he had become their dearest, as he was their most ardent, friend.

I have been obliged to tell you all this in order that you might understand, my dear Walter, the events which subsequently happened, and which form so important an era in the history of my past.

As I have said before, those were barbarous times; times in which the hand of the assassin was continuously suspended over the heads of the purest, and in which the only effective law was that of force and tyranny. As you know but too well, I was no better than the rest, perhaps not even so good as the majority; I knew not right from wrong, and any means seemed fair to me if I could only attain my long-desired aim. Channa must die, his death was resolutely fixed in my mind, and I only paused for an opportunity, and for a sure means of carrying this determination into effect.

I had been nearly two weeks at Benares before my plan was completely ripened, and an opportunity was found.

In the great Indian metropolis, as in all large cities, there were plenty of bravoes who would not be particular as to the means if they could obtain gold, men of that class to which crime is but a means of subsistence, and who look upon their bloody deeds as the easiest and most honest way of obtaining their living. To this class

of men I now turned my eyes. I knew that they would shrink from nothing, if properly paid, and that my vengeance was sure if entrusted to their hands.

I therefore hunted everywhere for men suited to my purpose, and I must confess I found them without much difficulty. I engaged four murderous villains, whom I well knew would do my work quickly and safely. To them I unfolded my plans, and their eyes seemed to express a wild joy as the prospect of a murder appeared before them, so low can human nature descend! So low, indeed, that we sometimes find the brutal propensities more strongly developed in it, than even in the beasts of prey themselves.

I told them all, but when I came to the name of my victim, my courage failed me; wicked, and a total stranger to all feelings of good and evil as I was, I could not utter the six letters which formed the name of my enemy. I proposed to accompany them and show them myself the man I had fixed upon, as the object of all my hate.

I learnt from one of Sakya's disciples, that the prince and Channa were going that night to the temple of Crishna, and that he had given orders that no one should accompany him.

I resolved to strike the decisive blow that very evening. To this effect I appointed my four

villains to meet me in the wood behind the temple an hour after sunset.

It was the month of June, and the heat was almost insupportable, but the shades of night were beginning to fall (and in that country, where there is no twilight, night succeeds to day almost directly the sun sets on the western horizon), and with the night a cool refreshing breeze sprung up from the fertile plains on the south side of the city.

I hurried through the narrow and dirty streets of the lower part of the town, and was soon out of it altogether. I then directed my course by the side of the river.

It was a dark night, without a moon, and the stars alone in the sky sparkled with their usual splendour. The dark waters of the winding river flowed silently on, illuminated here and there with the little flames which the Indian women trust to the current within a little boat. According to the old legend,—which says that these little lights are the emblems of earthly loves which float upon the waves of earthly troubles and affections, carried onward by the tide of our passions, —if this little flame moves brightly, and goes out of sight without upsetting, it is a sign that the beloved one is faithful; but if it sink immediately, the omen is considered as fatal. This practice is so common, that sometimes in the dusk of the evening the river is seen glittering all over

with lamps, and could be compared to a sea of little stars.

I envied these poor women as they stood by the water's side anxiously watching the progress of their little lamps down the current, with all their thoughts fixed upon some beloved one of whose passion that feeble light was the emblem. I had no one to love, no one to love me; I was alone in the world, but I had my vengeance with me, and perhaps that night I felt happier, in my way, than those innocent girls who so superstitiously trusted all their future to the ever-running waters of the Ganges.

At last I arrived at the temple of Crishna, where I found the four men I had previously appointed patiently awaiting my arrival. We hid ourselves behind the stone terraces and among the laurel and mango trees which overshadowed them. From this hiding-place we could see the entire flight of marble steps which led to the temple from the river's bank. I fixed upon this place, because I felt certain that Channa and the prince would come this way; and I was not mistaken, for we had not waited a quarter of an hour when I saw a little boat touch the foot of the stairs, and from it two men stepped out, who, after fastening the boat to the balustrade below, where it remained floating on the tranquil waters amongst the red lotus and water-lilies which

edged the wide river, ascended the marble steps towards our hiding-place.

That these two persons were the men I wanted, I could not doubt; but which was Channa, and which Sakya? This I could not tell, and yet I must know before striking the decisive blow. Presently one of them passed close by me, and I recognised him; it was Channa—he was crossing, by himself, the sacred grove. Sakya remained before the temple. He was therefore alone—now was the moment, now or never. I mustered all my courage, and coming out of my hiding-place amongst the trees, I stood in the middle of the path awaiting his arrival, while my four men, hidden behind the mango trees, only awaited the signal which I was to give them (as we had arranged beforehand) to besiege him on all sides.

Channa came slowly towards me, and without appearing to notice the presence of any stranger in this generally deserted spot. When he was close by I advanced toward him, and stopped him suddenly.

"Do you recognise me?" I said, "I am Ananda, Pastophora's mother, the Pastophora whose death you have caused. I have come to take my revenge upon you; you have been my enemy; you have tried to baffle all my plans from the beginning. For more than thirty years you have stood in my way; and I have grown old hating you.

But to-day I despise you, and I intend to trample upon you as I would upon the poisonous viper that would try to sting me."

Channa stopped short in his walk, and looked up at the woman who so strangely addressed him.

"You here?" he said, surprised I suppose, to see me in Benares, where he did not know I was living.

"You here? Go, Ananda, go, or I shall not be able to command myself. You who murdered Pastophora, your own daughter, should know what you can expect from Channa, whom she so faithfully loved. Go! . . . or in spite of all Sakya's teachings, you will lie a cold corpse at my feet before that cloud hides the bright star over our heads!"

"Do you presume to insult me again! . . . the time for words is passed; I intend to act . . ."

I would have said more, but I was suddenly stopped by his iron hand, which drew me with all his force towards him, while in his other hand I could see, by the dim light of the stars, the polished blade of a glittering knife. I gave a cry of horror. I was quite unprepared for this, and my voice failed me. In my terror, I even forgot the signal which might have brought eight strong arms to my rescue; but I was terrified out of my senses, and I lay motionless in the arms of my enemy. One moment more, and all my earthly suffering would have found an end. . . . But

suddenly I heard another voice beside me; it was a soft voice, but one which spoke in the calm accents of undisputed authority, and the grasp of iron which bound me was relaxed, and I fell upon the ground.

When I again looked up, Channa had disappeared, and in his place I saw Sakya, whose soft deep eyes were full upon me. I could not sustain that gaze, and looking another way, I managed to arise and arrange my disordered robes and hair.

"Ananda, I forgive thee," said the prince, with a calm imposing tone. "You have crossed my path more than once, and have tried to embitter the life of my friend; but you are but a poor, weak ignorant woman, and I forgive thee. . . . . Go."

I started up like a lioness when I heard his sweet, calm voice which aroused all my hatred and all my anger. "You forgive me!" I said. "You forgive me! I need not your forgiveness, I despise it as I do you. . . . . You say that I am but a weak woman, I will make you feel that I am more than a woman when aroused, and that I am not as powerless as you take me to be."

"Woman, hold your peace."

"My peace! Have I got any peace. . . . . ? You should know, you who have taken all away from me, you, Sakya, son of Suddhodana?"

"Silence! this is a sacred spot," he said, with

a commanding tone, that required great strength of mind, on my part, to disobey.

"No, I will not be silent. I will speak if I die for it. . . . . Know, Sakya, that I hate you! Since you were in your mother's womb I have hated you. But for you, my daughter would have been Suddhodana's favourite child; but for you I would have been queen; but for you I would have sat upon Kapila's throne, and worn a golden crown. . . . . I hated you since the day you were conceived in the womb. I owe all my sufferings to you; . . . . you, and you alone, have been the cause of all my misfortunes; . . . . you have ever stood in my path, alas! and I have been unable, until now, to remove you from it; . . . . but I hated you, and I hate you.

"There was a child once called Ananda. She was born a slave, of a slave, and to be a slave. But she was brought up amongst riches and grandeur, in a palace where she was despised, ill-treated, ... neglected by all, until her heart gave way, all that was good and true was blotted out of her life; nothing that purifies a woman's heart, and makes it good and loving, was ever imparted to that child. . . . .

"There was a girl called Ananda. She had grown up in a palace, but a stranger to all its pleasures, yet an ambitious soul stirred within her; she pined for power, for riches, for happiness, and out of her desires, out of her long

dreamt-of happiness, proceeded nothing but blood . . . . blood which rose at her touch. . . . . Ah, do you know what it is to suffer!"

I folded my arms upon my breast, and laughed in a howling tone. Lost and degraded as I was, I felt that that silent figure before me was not a total stranger to my miseries, that in spite of its outward unconsciousness, he pitied me in his heart.

"Do you see," I continued, "those little lights upon the river below? Even as those has my life been, ever troubled by the waves of passions, tossed hither and thither until I was wrecked at last, unable to fight against them any longer. There was a criminal called Ananda; she was criminal, and a murderess, but no one knew it, no one suspected her; she was too insignificant for anyone to have taken any notice of her.

"There was a woman called Ananda; she had a child, one only child, the happiness of her soul, the only joy of her heart, and *she* perished by her mother's hand. . . . .

"Ah . . . there was a mother, a mother whose daughter bloomed by her side . . . . but the child whom she pressed to her bosom was a lifeless corpse!

"Such has been my life. . . . . I have fallen lower, and lower, and still lower, until I have grown old, and people call me a witch; . . . . yet no one can despise me as I despise myself, and I

have nothing left to live for now—I loathe my own self.

"And you, Sakya, are the cause of it all . . . . . you. . . . . Have I reason to hate you . . . . ? to despise you . . . . ? to spit upon you as I do?"

My hatred had given me courage, and now I stood firm and erect before him with a flushed face and disordered dress, my black hair floating on the night wind. But Sakya was motionless; he looked as unconscious of my presence as the great statue of Crishna inside the temple might have been, and my words seemed to have as little effect upon him.

"Will you know all . . . . ?" I cried, enraged by his indifferent air. "Will you know all . . . ? Well it was I who murdered your mother . . . . it was I, the despised slave, who killed Queen Maia . . . . Can you understand now to what my hatred can reach?"

The prince had crossed his arms upon his breast and listened in silence to this terrific revelation, which was accompanied by the outburst of my long-suppressed hatred, but he did not change one muscle of his countenance, such was his self-possession.

"You are silent, Sakya . . . . but I suppose you feel towards me as I feel towards you."

"No, I bear you no ill will, God knows . . . . I simply pity you . . . . and pray you will soon recognise your faults, and repent."

"Hypocrite, do you intend to baffle me with your soft words . . . . . *you* speak of faults and repentance . . . and of God! you who are fighting against him by preaching Atheism, you who pretend to be too good even for the Brahmins, and would fain introduce a new faith, of which you would be the Divinity. But your plan will not succeed; Brahma and his angels will rise in judgment against you, and condemn you to sudden transmigrations, and ere long you, the pure prince, the self-made Buddha, will crawl at my feet in the body of a snail."

"Have you much more to say?"

"No, no more, go . . . . this is the last time we shall meet upon earth. Remember my last words—I would not change at this moment, I, the despised Ananda, who is stained with her daughter's blood, with you, the mighty prince who would call himself God!"

Sakya looked upon me once more in silence, then he walked with his eyes fixed upon the ground towards the entrance of the grove.

As he turned to go I called my men and gave the signal. . . . . "that is the man," . . . . . I cried to them, "away with him."

The words were hardly out of my mouth when eight strong arms encircled the prince and four daggers were raised in the air.

But Sakya quietly lifted his eyes and stepped

back, when to my astonishment and horror the four villains turned and fell on their knees before him. . . . . They had recognised in their proposed victim their worshipped hero and their friend Buddha.

III.

> "Painful are repeated transmigrations;
> But now have I beheld the architect,
> Thou shalt not build me another house;
> Thy rafters are broken, thy roof timbers scattered.
> My mind is detached from all;
> I have attained the extinction of desire."
>
> SAKYA MUNI.

I WAS left once more alone. My vengeance had mocked me. Sakya and Channa were once more free; they had escaped my revenge!

After this last effort I lost all hope of ever gratifying it, my life became a burden, and everything around me seemed to be hateful to me. A sense of attraction I could not account for, bound me still to Sakya and his disciples. In spite of myself I followed him wherever he went, travelling with the great crowds of friends and admirers that accompanied him everywhere. It was not that I admired his doctrines, for I could hardly understand their beauty and their morality to appreciate their worth; but the path of my life seemed to lie there, beside him, and I only seemed to exist where he was.

In this way I followed him to Kusinagara,

where the Malla princes resided. Sakya had now been teaching for many years, and his health was giving way. All his disciples and also he himself expected his death from one day to another, and some even said that he had predicted the very hour in which it would take place.

One autumn evening, in Kusinagara, he had himself transported to a little mountain in the midst of the garden of the palace,—there reclining between the lofty Sala-trees, and with his face turned towards the setting sun, he sang his well known hymn of joy and farewell.

"The end of my career has arrived, my mission is fulfilled. Oh! God, take me to thyself, and let me enter blest Nirwana's glorious peace. Through many, and various, and oft-repeated births, I have run my earthly course, passing from one to the other ever in an ascending course through that high road of progress which knows no end. Painful and wearying are repeated births, painful and wearying, as I well know, but I thank thee, oh great artificer, for having allotted them to me. One existence is as naught compared to thy eternity, and yet some men would fain believe in only one. The swans go on the path of the sun; they go through the ether, by their own miraculous power of instinct, so are the wise led out of this world, when they have conquered Mara and his train, but not till then.* And the

* "Dhammapada," p. 175.

heart of love and faith accompanying good actions spreads a beneficent shade through all our lives.* We pass, but our actions do not pass, therefore, when I am gone, you must not think that there is no Buddha. For my words shall be your Buddha. The earth and the sky will pass away, but my words will not be lost.

"I have sought through all the world's extension, but in vain, the builder of this house framed by desire. Now at last I have found thee, not in any remote corner of the universe, but in my own heart; there remain, oh, House Builder, no house, henceforward, will'st thou build for me, for having quenched the passions of earthly desires, all the ties that linked my soul to earth are broken down, walls and ridge-pole exist no more, my rafters are broken, my roof timber scattered, my mind is detached from all; I have at last attained the extinction of desire, and my soul from earthly lives has gained release.

"Farewell, oh earth and friends! and now for blest Nirwana's eternal peace."†

This was his last dying hymn. There he lay, amid the thousands who had come from all parts of Asia to hear him, with no covering over his head but the eternal azure heavens, and no throne

* Buddhagosha's Parables, p. 16.

† See "Hardy's Manual," p. 180. "Johnson's Oriental Religions (India)," p. 666. "The Pathfinder," vol. v., p. 380. "Muller's Dhammapada," p. ciii. "Buddhagosha's Parables," and Barthélemy de Saint-Hilaire, "Le Buddha et sa Religion," (Sakya's death).

but the green grass and wild flowers of the earth; there he lay, calmly watching the setting sun. When at last it sunk upon the western horizon, the great prophet breathed his last. His soul had quitted the earth with the king of day.

Darkness fell upon the earth, and cries of lamentation rose on every side. Some wept aloud, and with uplifted arms; some sank upon the earth, as though they had been stricken down; the most superstitious fancied the very earth quaked, and that strange music resounded in the air; others reeled about crying, "Too soon, too soon, has Sakya departed! too soon has his eye closed on the world." But those more advanced in his religion calmly submitted themselves, saying, "Transitory things are perishable; in this world there is no permanence."*

Thus there was great lamentation; yet they said he had but ascended into Nirwana, had but passed away from the weariness of death into blessedness and peace.

How they buried him, it were long to tell. Thousands attended, with music, singing, and dancing; the body was prepared, the pile was raised, garlands of sweet flowers were hung about. and in the end, after many days, flame was added, and the body was consumed. Then the burnt bones were all carefully collected, and divided into eight parts, a part being handed to citizens from

* "The Wheel of the Law," p. 234.

eight cities, who took home their share, and built temples over them, which stand unto this day, and have been successively examined by Englishmen.*

But the Buddhists have other remains; they have his begging pot, sandals, pieces of finger-nails, hair, and, in truth, an immense stock of sacred objects, including numerous fine impressions of his foot or phrabat, and these, like the Christian relics, are visited with pious reverence by the millions of believers, who place the same confidence in their healing virtues that we do in the relics of Jesus.

* Dr Perfitt's "Life and Teachings of Sakya," § 11.

IV.

> "You call it a great failure? ne'er the less
> It is the shadow of a great success."
>
> GERALD MASSEY.

I HAVE little more to say respecting that primitive life of mine, which we have both so long ago forgotten. With all its crimes and miseries it was yet a great step in the ladder of progress, for every little toil and sorrow serves as a lesson by which we shall eventually attain to goodness and future happiness. Since then I have had many existences, and might well say with Sakya, "Through a long course of almost endless beings, have I in sorrow sought the great creator," but all have been more or less dependent on the one I have tried to bring back to your recollection, as that one was dependent on the previous ones I had gone through before, and which I think better not to reveal to you at present. But I may almost begin to date my human career upon this planet, from the miserable existence I have attempted to delineate, for it was in it that we were first brought together, a connection which has exercised such peculiar influence over both our beings,

and ever since which our paths have run side by side till they have merged into one.

I have but little more to tell you about it, dearest Walter. A few months after the death of the prince I also expired in the very city of Dewadaha where I had been born, and I entered once more the spiritual world. The spirit zone of this planet, but not the spirit world in which I now live, for in heaven as on earth there are many mansions, as Christ said, and in dying we do not all go to the same place.

My spiritual existence in those days, if I may call it a spiritual existence at all, was rudimentary, and undeveloped as my earthly life had been, and the same passions which blinded me while on earth, hid from me in the new sphere I now inhabited all the splendours and joys that the good and pure alone can taste in it. My spirit was low, material, and gross, consequently matter predominated and surrounded me on all sides, for as you know, my dearest husband, death has not the power some would attribute to it, of changing our beings and fixing our future. Death does not change our nature, we must learn through matter, and while in the body; thus we must return again and again until we have conquered ourselves, and learned through the bitter lessons of experience all the wisdom the earth can offer, all that is good and wise and advantageous for our souls. The child must go to school day after day, week after

week, until he has learnt all that he can there learn, when he is taken to a University to learn more and acquire fresh experience, until he has completed his education, and can enter into the full enjoyment of his inheritance of eternal life. When "*death will have no more power over him, neither will he die any more.*"* You died some months after me in Kapila where you had repaired to reside in Suddhodana's palace.

In the spirit world we met, but still as enemies, for me you were always my enemy Channa, and I hated you in the spirit sphere as I had hated you upon the material earth.

Pastophora was also there, the same sweet and gentle creature she had always been, although, of course, not so advanced in intelligence and wisdom and purity, as you have known her during her last incarnation when she acted the part of your mother and loved you so much.

This is all I can tell you about that remote existence which I would have completely forgotten, if I had not seen it once more from that little star in the constellation of Orion. You, of course, have lost all consciousness of it, and no wonder; with your present organisation, your memory must necessarily be imperfect and limited, for you are naturally dependent on the material machinery of your present frame.

"Were man to be immortal, with his present

* Death being swallowed up in victory.

corporeal frame," as Sir Humphrey Davy said with so much reason, "this immortality would only belong to the machinery; and with respect to acquisitions of mind, he would virtually die every two or three hundred years; that is to say, a certain quantity of ideas only could be remembered, and the supposed immortal being would be, with respect to what happened a thousand years ago, as the adult now is with respect to what happened in the first year of his life."* No wonder then that you cannot recall to mind events which occurred 2400 years ago.

* "Consolations in Travel, or the Last Days of a Philosopher." Dialogue IV.

V.

"Slowly the Bible of the race is writ;
Each age, each kindred adds a verse to it,
Texts of despair or hope, of joy or moan.
While swings the sea, while mists the mountains shroud,
While thunder's surges burst on cliffs of cloud,
Still at the prophet's feet the nations sit."

J. R. Lowell.

Walter. "You have pictured the various scenes of that remote existence with such natural colours, that I too seem now to see it before me in life-like reality; although, as you remarked, I have not the faintest recollection of it; but this too might be, as you say, for if the sentient principle conceives thought through material instruments only, its remembrance of material events must necessarily change as those instruments change.

"How I would like to remember all those past events of my spirit's history! Can it be possible that I have lived by the side of the great Buddha, and even been his friend! Oh, if I could but recollect that past, if I could but fly, like you, dearest, to the remote stars, and from thence view it all over again just as it took place! Then, perhaps, I could solve all the contradictory accounts relating to the life of that great man—

if it be proper to call him a man—for he was, indeed, a doer of wonderful works, a mighty prophet, and a divine reformer, the man that has effected the greatest revolution upon the face of this earth, and, to this very day, the best known and yet the most misunderstood of human beings."

Conchita. "You are right Walter, Sakya was indeed, a mighty *Being,* who came to this earth on a mission of love and mercy. And with you, I think it is hardly proper to call him a man; for he had reached already a higher step of the ascending ladder in the scale of being. He did a great deal of good in the eastern world, his doctrines of peace and progress have influenced, for centuries after his death, the morals and customs not merely of the Hindoos, but also of the Persians, Egyptians, Chinese, Siamese, and even Jews. And his followers number to-day the greater majority of human beings, the Christians not numbering so many by one-half.*

* "Of course it will be very readily conceived that there are insuperable difficulties lying in the way to prevent a correct census from being taken, so that we can only approximate to a correct result; and if we accept the statistics furnished by some of our Christian priests and missionaries, although we may doubt their correctness, the doubt will not be based upon the idea that the religions of Europe have been unfairly treated, for their figures tell against the supremacy of Christianity, and show that the believers in other religions are more numerous. There can be no reason for refusing to accept their conclusions, but only for questioning if they have not put a better face upon their own side than the facts will warrant. They acknowledge that there are above 400,000,000 Buddhists in the world (the Rev. Ernest Eitel, in one of his

"It is indeed a grand religion, and undoubtedly the religious system which numbers one-third of the human race ought to have importance enough for us to study all its dogmas and doctrines with the attention due to a religion which is based upon the oldest Bible the humanity of this earth possesses, upon no less than the Rig Veda itself.

"And yet it is only lately that Europeans know anything about it. But a few years ago we positively knew nothing whatever about the history of its founder; and the European missionaries sent over to India and China came

Lectures delivered at Hong-Kong, says 450,000,000, fully one third of the human race), and that the Christians do not number so high by above one-half. They admit that the Buddhists are the most numerous, the followers of Mahomet the next, Christianity standing third upon the list. Consequently, if majorities are to rule, then we should all join the Buddhist Church, wherein, and much to their astonishment, many would discover that the same moral truths are taught as in the Christian, and not merely a few of the spiritual ones. But in making up the Christian statistics, it happens most unfortunately that all are reckoned who dwell in 'Christian lands.' Thus, although it be declared, upon high authority, that the working classes of England and other countries have deserted from the faith, and are called infidels, when the statistics of Christianity are supplied, they are all reckoned as true Christians. Moreover, although the Protestants deny that Catholics and Greek Churchmen are Christians, in the proper sense of the term, yet when Christianity is contrasted in point of numbers with Buddhism, then to swell the total, all these repudiated Christians are reckoned as belonging to the true fold. If only such were numbered as *are Christians indeed*, the comparative standard would show most unfavourably for the creed of Christendom."—Dr Perfitt's "Life and Teachings of Sakya," § 1; "The Pathfinder," vol. v.

back saying that everything good the Buddhists taught was stolen from our sacred books, and that their doctrines were atheistic, and wild and untrue. And the Christian world would undoubtedly have remained in the same gross ignorance, if it had not been for the labours and studies of Remusat, Bournouf, Wilson, Max Muller, and Hodgson, who so bravely collected and translated many of the ancient sacred books, thus encouraging others to SEARCH after those hidden truths contained in the world's scriptures, which may some day help to throw the greatest light upon the mystery of our being."

Walter. "You seem to be very fond of those old Brahminical and Buddhist religions; do you think them better than our own? Do you consider the doctrines of Sakya superior to those we hold in Europe?"

Conchita. "No. Buddhism would not do for us, any more than Christianity would do for the Hindoos. Every race possesses a revelation of its own, all religions are good for those to whom they are revealed, and we would do wrong to change. But I may say with the American poet—

> "*Slowly the Bible of the age is writ;*
> *Each age, each kindred, adds a verse.*"

Revelation, which began when the earth began, can only end with the destruction of the planet. Until then, every day men will be receiving new truths, learning new lessons of virtue and of ex-

perience. God speaks to us frequently—as frequently as He did to our forefathers. He speaks to our hearts, not through prophets and seers, as He did of old, but through nature, through His universal creation; for God is always with us, and inspiration is constantly inbreathed or *inspired* from Him through His works, by means of His spiritual messengers, and from the very atmosphere we inhale, the air being the means of life."

Walter. "I quite agree with you, my Conchita, in believing religious teachings, as all other teachings, to be progressive. There is no doubt that progress is the universal law of nature. If we compare the Greeks and Romans with the ancient Hindoos and Mexicans, and the Greeks and Romans, in their turn, with the modern Europeans, it cannot, I think, be doubted that men have progressed not only physically but morally, and that the improvements of civilisation and manners have been subservient to a superior state of intellectual and religious belief. But excuse me if at present I cannot see the superiority of Christianity over Buddhism. It seems to me that in this respect at least we cannot have progressed much. Sakya's doctrines were as good and as philosophical as any we possess to-day, and it seems to me that it would be almost impossible to surpass them."

Conchita. "Sakya's doctrines, as you say, were good and philosophical, but those taught by Christ,

while on the shores of the little sea of Galilee, present a higher moral standard to humanity; for Christ's sublime doctrine has never been equalled, and will never be surpassed, although men will grow to comprehend it better. He was the first to proclaim the fatherhood of God, and this alone would have placed him in a position far above that of all other men had he been a man. Sakya spoke to the mind; Jesus spoke to the hearts of men. Sakya spoke as a man; Jesus spoke like a God. Can you, after this, doubt for one moment the superiority of the religion of Jesus over that taught by his predecessor?"

Walter. "No. But don't you think that Christ's history is very similar, strange to say, to that of Gotama Buddha, whom you have called Sakya?"

Conchita. "Need I remind you, Walter, that history repeats itself? This is a well-known fact, and one which conceals a greater truth than is generally attributed to it. If you study the lives of all the great teachers—Osiris, Crishna, Vishnu, Zoroaster, Sakya-Muni, Socrates, and even those which are purely imaginary, but which men in their legends treat as if they had really existed, as the Baldour of the Scandinavians, the Bacchus of the Arabians, the Adonis of the Phœnicians, the Mithra of the Persians, the Heracles of the Greeks, &c.—you will find them to be more or less wonderfully alike, and to agree in all prin-

cipal points. And this alone teaches us that all religions are one in their origin, and in their fundamental truths only more or less developed according to the intellectual development to which the men to whom they were given have attained. The creed of any age is, at best, but the index to the state of advancement of that age. All religions are one, in spite of the contradictory doctrines some of them teach; for you will invariably find that these have been introduced later on into the popular theology, and that the original founder of the faith was a total stranger to them."

Walter. "You have interested me so much, dearest Conchita, in the history of our past, that I am quite anxious to know the rest; surely you will have no objection to tell me a little more, now that you have gone thus far? Where and when did your next incarnation take place? I am most curious to know all about it, as you may imagine; for, after all, though I must confess I can scarcely realise it, yet it is also the history of my spirit, and to that past I have so long forgotten, I owe what I know to-day, and what I shall know to-morrow."

Conchita. "I am glad to see, my dearest husband, that you take so great an interest in the history of our past, and that the fleeting joys and sorrows of the earth do not absorb your interest and blind you, as unfortunately they blind so many, to the true purpose for which they are

given, the great end they are destined to effect, and to the more intellectual and higher enjoyments of spiritual communion. I will, therefore, lose no time, for our friendly enemy the sun is already more than half way through his course in the opposite hemisphere, and will soon make his appearance upon this beautiful island, separating us once more for the rest of the day.

VI.

"Two thousand years ago, the sun arose,
And filled the æthereal dome with gorgeous shows,
Even as now; the earth was clad in green
And gold, full fair as since hath ever been;
And great trees swayed, and brimming rivers flowed,
Sweet music making to the thrilling lays,
That lifted up to God instinctive praise—
Just as to-day; and winds swept land and sea,
And lightnings tore night's dismal canopy,
While thunder rolled along from sky to sky,
And woke, in withered woods, the prey bird's cry,—
As now, so then: this very earth we tread."

HENRY PRIDE.

"I WAS next born, during the first years of our present era, in the little village of Judea called Bethany, which has since become so famous thoughout Christendom, and which is so full of mementoes of him to whom we owe our faith. I need not describe to you the site of this little village; be it enough to state that it lies about fifteen furlongs, or nearly two miles, from the capital, on the south-eastern side, where the slopes of the Mount of Olives offer such a magnificent panorama of the whole country, including the Dead Sea and the Jordan. It was then as to-day, but a poor little hamlet, and the last one before the solitary and desert-like hills which

reach as far as Jericho ; a few cottages and farms composed the whole village ; but in those days it was a bright little place, ever smiling with its many orchards and olive plantations, a delicious green haven at the very doors of the wilderness ; not as to-day, a dreary spot inhabited by a few Arab families, only speaking of decay and misery to the pilgrims who visit it for the sake of its many associations, which are so dear to all Christians.

I was born of an humble but independent family, my father being a carpenter, by name Josias, and my mother, who died shortly after my birth, also a Galilean. I was considered the only child ; for, although my parents had once a son, by name Barabbas, he had behaved shamefully to them, and had left them soon afterwards, not having been heard of again ; so that we supposed he had been drowned in his voyage to Rome, where he had gone to make his fortune, in company with two other young men of our village.

This time, although I was neither born powerful, nor rich, nor even beautiful, yet I was mistress of myself, and not a bondswoman, and therefore considered myself as good as any of those around me ; so that I was not so unhappy, nor did I feel so degraded as I had done during my past existence, when I found myself but a slave amongst princes and nobles, a mere waiting girl in a sumptuous palace.

The first years of my life were again passed

in ignorance and forgetfulness; for we are all obliged, when we come once more upon the earth, to forget our past, and begin life as it were anew; and this is the reason why children, contrary to all other young animals, are apparently so devoid of all intelligence and resources, all their motions are at first automatic, and only become voluntary by association; they wonder and stare at everything they see, as if they were trying to recollect the events of their past existence, and associate them with their present impressions; they have to learn everything anew, and educate their new organs by slow and difficult processes, and many months elapse before they are even able to stand alone, and have learnt to speak with their new tongues, and many years before they are able to provide for the common wants of life, and can be said to have begun once more their career through the ages. Thus we can only attain the fullness of our reason after several years, and must acquire it gradually, for we must learn how to use our new organs before we can make any profitable use of them.

When I arrived at the age of nine, which was when I was capable once more of continuing my progressive career,—just at the point where I had left it off at my previous death,—I was living alone with my father; he was poor, and his shop was but a miserable home, yet we were happy, for he loved me with all his heart, and our wants were

few; but as time went on, new cares and troubles came upon him, his eyesight began to fail, and he could hardly do as much work as would suffice to maintain us as in bygone years.

There lived not far from our home a family of wealth and repute. They were very well off, and lived in the best house of the little village, of which they were the acknowledged head people, for they took the presidence at the synagogue, and in all the local affairs.

The head of this family was one named Eleazar; he was a sincere friend of my father's, in spite of the great difference of social position that existed between them, and like him he was a widower; but he had three children, a boy and two girls, of about my own age. This worthy man seeing the great difficulties with which my poor father had to contend, and the scarcity of his means, kindly proposed to him to adopt me as one of his own children, with whom, he said, I could be brought up, and in future take up my abode. This proposition — as you may imagine — was received by Josias with raptures of joy, and accepted by him with tears in his eyes; for, as he afterwards told me, he was reduced to his last resources, and but for this kind offer, he would have been at a loss how to procure enough nourishment for our two mouths.

Since that day I lived in Eleazar's house, where I was treated like one of his own daughters, and

where I grew and thrived under his paternal care.

As I have said before, Eleazar's family consisted of a boy and two girls. At the time when I begin to relate my history to you, the son, Lazarus, was about nineteen, and already gave very fair promise of having inherited the virtues and noble heart of his father. He was a straightforward, open-hearted, righteous lad, humble and meek as his father and grandfather had been before him; a true son of Abraham, ever faithful to the traditions of the Jewish people, and never departing for one moment from the strict commands of the Mosaic law, in which he had been brought up by his zealous father, with true fear of God.

His two sisters were called Martha and Mary. Martha was a plain-spoken, modest young woman, and being the eldest, she took upon herself all the house-keeping cares, and also did the honours of the father's home, all the weight of domestic duties fell consequently to her share, although she was not much over twenty. She was not beautiful, but she had a kind, amiable face, and was loved and cherished by all, for she was ever bright and cheerful, a model of self-helpfulness and prudence, and an air of domestic felicity prevailed wherever she went. She was intelligent and active, and would have made any home a happy one, such was her unselfish and practical management of all the household duties entrusted to her care.

Mary was a year younger than her sister, and she was the very opposite both in countenance and in character. She was most beautiful in every sense of this wide word. She was exceedingly fair, which was a rare thing amongst Jewish women, and her eyes were of that purest blue which can only be compared to the sky of that bright, exhilarating, yet ever warm and genial clime. Her countenance was sweet, but it also gave token of a proud, firm, and decided character. Her features were perfectly moulded, and every movement of her graceful figure contributed to make one beautiful whole, such as is so rarely met with. But her great beauty, and that which formed the great feature of Mary, was her splendid hair, which from her birth had been the admiration of all who knew her. It was excessively long, and of a deep, rich, golden hue, of that rich gold which the old Italian painters so delighted in giving to their beautiful ideas of female loveliness.

In character she was as different from her sister as in appearance. It would be absurd to say that she was ignorant of her beauty, and of her supreme and irresistible powers of fascination. She was as conscious of them as any of her numerous admirers might have been, but she seemed to despise them, and to set her own beauty at defiance. She was not as active, nor as cheerful as her sister Martha, nor, indeed, was she practical in

any way. She had a contemplative, highly excitable nature, a nature capable of sinking her to the very lowest depths of vice, or of lifting her to the highest of heavenly virtues, if only aroused in one or the other direction. She was an enthusiast, but her enthusiasm took anything but an analytic turn, being guided by her feelings rather than by her reason ; in her heart she despised all the little cares and troubles of her elder sister ; she was far above all those petty cares of every-day life, and her lofty, excitable nature pined for liberty, and for an unclouded, open sky, whereon to stretch her wings, and shape her immortal flight for evermore.

From her earliest youth I had been her dearest companion, almost her only friend, for both her sister and her brother had a sort of dread of her that always divided them, and made any kind of sympathy, or even brotherly or sisterly affection, impossible between them. And even her father was often shocked by her firm and daring resolutions, and by the strange turns of her mind, which no one could control, and which were so in opposition to all the conventionalities of the family history, an history which Eleazar, as a true Jew, considered the very foundation of his race, and the stereotyped pattern to be followed by all its branches.

I was too ignorant in those days, and too young in the scale of humanity, to feel any vio-

lent admiration for any one, but as far as my then undeveloped nature would allow me, I may be said to have loved Mary. We were of the same age, and had been constantly together from our earliest childhood and youth, long before I came to live definitely at her father's house, so that we had grown to be inseparable friends, and from this early friendship I may almost date the eventful history of my regeneration. Of course, I was far from possessing the grand character and the elevated nature of my friend, but then, as I have subsequently learned, she had had many previous incarnations, and had gone through many trials which for me were yet in store for the future. No wonder, therefore, that she should be so much in advance of me, so much before me in every way.

I was the constant companion of her maidenhood, as I had before been the playfellow of her childhood; we were known in Bethany as the two inseparables. I say in Bethany, because we seldom went out of the little village, and indeed lived almost entirely in the house, according to Martha's desires, who could not bear the idea of her sister's lonely wanderings through the desert hills beyond the village, or over the Mount of Olives towards the town, which had been Mary's greatest happiness whilst a child.

Jerusalem was a place we rarely visited, and when we did go there, which was only to attend

some great festival at the temple, we were covered with thick veils, so that Mary's graces were almost unknown outside the little circle of farmers and villagers which composed our only friends. It might have been thought at first that Martha was jealous of her beautiful sister, and that it was this jealousy that prompted these strict measures, but those who knew Martha's character would at once have rejected the supposition of any such selfish motive in the nature of her orders; she, as I have said before, was modest and simple as the rest of her family, and consequently hated all things approaching show, or luxury of any kind, and as such she considered her younger sister's numerous charms. She was a good-hearted, simple-minded woman, not by any means devoid of sentiment, nor yet of talent, but incapable of comprehending Mary's loftier nature, and quite incapable of appreciating her poetical and passionate temperament.

Under these circumstances it would have been impossible for the younger sister to have been happy in a house where one so different to herself in every way ruled supreme; yet she did not appear unhappy, or at least took care never to exhibit any signs of discontent; she was polite and submissive to her father and sister, who were kind and indulgent with her when their different characters did not come into direct opposition, but I who lived with them and knew them as perhaps they did

not know themselves, could see all that Mary suffered in her father's house, suffered in silence, for she never complained, no, not even to me, her only friend, for she was proud and took the greatest pains to hide her sufferings—even from herself—but she buried them all in her heart, and there they accumulated day by day, year by year, until they grew too numerous to remain hidden much longer, and the storm thickened over the peaceful roof of Eleazar's house threatening every moment to burst out upon it.

VII.

> "All thoughts, all passions, all delights,
> Whatever stirs this mortal frame,
> All are but ministers of love,
> And feed his sacred flame."
>
> COLERIDGE.

A LITTLE above the village of Bethany, and on the right of the desolate road which leads through the wilderness to the Dead Sea beyond, there was in those days a grove of stately palms whose leaves rose high upon the cloudless ether of the deep blue eastern sky, and around their slender graceful trunks there grew in great profusion, and with almost wild luxuriance, a thick underwood of dark green sycamores and ilex trees which contrasted admirably with the turquoise sky, and the waving branches of the palms.

In the centre of this delicious little retreat there was a well, which the thick branches of the trees around it half concealed amongst their eternal verdure. In this retired and overarched retreat silence and solitude were always to be found, and a delicious fresh breeze prevailed even in the hottest of summer days, when the sun shed its scorching rays of fire upon the dusty and red-hot sand of the desert; and under the grateful shadow

of the lofty trees surrounding this little well, the weary traveller always found a cool spot whereon to rest his weary feet, and moisten his thirsty lips; far away from the hum of men, and the clash of labour, a priceless haven in that sultry clime.

To this little wayside fountain Mary and I often repaired while we were living at Eleazar's house in Bethany; it was a refreshing excursion in our monotonous life, every act of which had grown wearisome and hateful to us. At this retired well overarched by so many branches we could always find a respite from the little household quarrels which would sometimes arise to break the daily routine of our monotonous existence. Mary delighted to come to it, and under its delicious shade she often spent whole days now that her sister had so set her mind against the rambles she had so loved before, through the deserted mountains and the olive-covered hills towards Jerusalem. Everything here had a charm for her, and she felt in this desolate spot what she could never have done in her father's house, she felt happy and free, and never lonely, for the birds which haunted the place in thousands were more congenial company for her than was her elder sister; thus she never felt dull in this quiet retreat, for her vivid imagination created friends to her fancy, whom she cherished and loved as she alone could love.

One evening, towards the close of the summer, we went to this well for water with our earthen

pitchers upon our heads. It had been a very oppressive day and the ground was still hot under our feet. The sun had now gone down, but its last rays threw a golden tint all around us, and the western sky glowed like a red-hot shield of burnished gold.

As we left the village we saw a band of young girls who were dancing in a neighbouring orchard, and their merry voices rose on high like the sweet sound of the nightingale's thrilling notes. Mary's face darkened as their melodious voices reached her ear, and her handsome face was suddenly suffused with a vivid carmine.

"Do you hear those girls, Miriam?" she said, calling my attention to them. "They seem happy and joyful. Oh! if I could but exchange my lot for theirs."

"I am sure, Mary," I said, "that if we could see their inmost desires we should find that it is *they* who would like to exchange with you. Don't you know how envied you are? Are you not the handsomest as well as the richest of all the maidens this side of Jerusalem?"

Mary smiled as if in contempt. "And much they bring me, my vaunted charms and my wealth!" she said at last; and then changing the tone of her voice, she exclaimed, "Ah, Miriam! I am heartily tired of all this; I am sad and lonely, I who should be the happiest and merriest girl in Judea! I am beautiful, you say. . . . . .

Ah! would to God I were not, for then I might perhaps be allowed to go where I liked unnoticed, and live in the town . . . Jerusalem. . . . Ah! how I envy those who live within thy walls! You say that I am rich . . . . rich! and what is the use of money if you are not allowed to spend it. I tell you frankly, Miriam, I would much rather be a beggar at once, than being an heiress as I am, be obliged to go to the well for water." This remembrance seemed to change the current of her ideas, for she continued—"Have we not got slaves and servants who are born to minister to our wants,—that I should be treated by my own sister as if I were a slave myself, and be made to work like one in my own house? Martha is always finding fault with me for one thing and another, calling me idle and lazy, and threatening to tell my father. Let her if she will . . . she would make a capital spy. Oh, Miriam, would to God we were far away from this weary place."

We had now arrived at the well, and had entered through our usual path by the bushes of the sycamores, but to our surprise, instead of finding the secluded spot empty as usual, we discovered in it a man, who lay by the side of the well apparently asleep. He lay close by the opening, upon the stone casing which surrounded its mouth, and which the ropes of ages had gradually worn away. His position seemed so dangerous that we both gave a slight scream when

we saw him. We approached him now with the intention of awakening him, but when I reached his side Mary stopped me. "How beautiful he is," she said. "Do not awake him; do not frighten him away. Did you ever see so handsome a man before, Miriam?"

He was indeed handsome and in the prime of life, and as he lay there, lost in sweet slumber, with the golden rays of the setting sun shining upon him through the trees, he looked more like a god than a man. He was richly dressed, and his beard, which was of a dark brown, was carefully trained and perfumed, which indicated a man of fortune and of fashion. Mary went up close to him and seemed lost in admiration; and God knows how long we might have remained watching and admiring him had he not turned in his sleep and changed his position. Mary gave a cry and put out both her hands to sustain him, fearing lest he might roll over into the well, which was very deep, when he suddenly woke up to find himself in the young girl's arms. He looked up and stared at her in silence; she was so frightened by this sudden start that the blood rushed to her face, but even thus she looked so beautiful, with her golden locks showering over her fair head, that the man might well have been astonished at seeing her.

"Art thou an angel or a woman?" he said at last, when his surprise allowed him to speak. "I

think thou art the former, though I wish thou wert the latter!"

"I am only a woman then, if that will please you better," murmured Mary, lowering her beautiful eyes, which shrank from his steady penetrating gaze.

"Ah! All glory be to Jehovah, beautiful creature . . . . only a woman . . . . is not that enough, only a woman!" And he kept repeating this last sentence as if he found an inexplicable pleasure in it. "Only a woman!"

"But I must introduce myself, beautiful lady; perhaps I am intruding in your garden. I am Raphael, the son of Simon; I come from the Dead Sea over yonder, and I have been travelling all day; the heat and the fatigue had exhausted both my horse and myself, so on passing this delicious spot, where I knew water was to be found, I tied my horse to yonder tree, and came to refresh myself under these stately palms, as our Father Abraham might have done in the good old times of yore. I came to the well, and as I lay by its side, looking at the transparent waters I could not reach, I fell asleep, and might perhaps have fallen into it, and been drowned, if it had not been for you, my preserver, who so opportunely have come to my rescue. But, perhaps I am intruding, I do not know this country at all, and you will excuse me, beautiful Rachel, if, perchance, I have entered, like a

robber, into your own private garden; . . . . . but," he added, looking at her again. . . . . "How many would not be robbers for you."

Mary blushed again. "I am not Rachel, my name is Mary—Mary of Bethany—perhaps you have heard of my father, Eleazar, he lives in the village close by."

"Indeed, I have," said Raphael. "But not so much of the father as of the daughter, who is reckoned the most beautiful woman this side of Jerusalem. How could I be so blind as not to have recognised in you that beautiful creature of whom one hears so much; but, then, you are so infinitely handsomer than I ever could have imagined any woman to be!"

Mary's heart beat with joy as she heard this, it was so new to her to hear her beauty extolled. For, strange to say, this man, a complete stranger as he was, had been the first who had ever spoken to her the language of admiration. She knew that she was handsome, the polished plate of steel that served her for looking-glass, told her this every morning; but it was such a new and pleasant sensation to be told that she was beautiful by a man; and what woman does not like to be told so, especially by so handsome and glorious a type of manhood as this?

But sudden recollections of her father and sister came to her mind in the midst of her triumph, and she shuddered as she thought how

shocked they would be if they could know of it, they who had tried all they could to make her believe in her beauty as in an evil to be dreaded, rather than an advantage; and who hated flattery and compliments of all kind, as pomps and vanities to be despised. Mary turned pale as she thought of all this, and, with a trembling voice, tried to change the conversation.

"You have not been mistaken in your first supposition, sir, this is a public place, one of the regular wells opened by the care of our fathers for the good of the poor travellers who are forced to traverse the wilderness."

"And you came to it for water; . . . ah, thank you, thank you . . . . !"

"Thank *me*, and for what? I have only done what any other in my place would have done; I saw you by the water side, where you might easily have fallen had you turned in your sleep, and I have watched you; I am sure you would have done the same in my place . . . ."

"If you had been in mine . . . . ? Ha, that would have been too lucky an adventure for me, beautiful Mary. I am only permitted to behold you when you are awake, and when those bright eyes of yours make mine turn to the ground whence I hardly dare raise them towards your face. . . . . But even thus I would gladly give twenty years of my life to be allowed to behold them."

"We must go, Mary," I now said to her.

"Martha, your sister, will be impatient if we do not go back to her."

"Do you come every day to this well?" asked Raphael, taking one of Mary's hands in his.

"I cannot tell you, you are too inquisitive," answered the young girl, blushing again, as she withdrew her hand; and then she added, as if she repented her words, "I come sometimes, but not during the hours of the great heat . . . . nor yet at night; but what *does* it matter to you when I come for water; your journey lies another way, and most likely we shall never meet again . . . . farewell!"

She ran back to the house, where I soon followed her with my pitcher of water which was now full; but as I left the well, I saw the stranger mount his horse and go on his way to the city, but very slowly, and looking back at every turn as if he had left his heart behind him.

VIII.

"The rage of the vulture, the love of the turtle,
Now melt into sorrow, now madden to crime."

After this chance meeting Raphael became our frequent companion at the well, where we found him of an afternoon. He was the only son of a very rich man of one of the best families of Jerusalem, and the sole heir to his large fortune. His character was passionate and vehement like that of Mary, and he loved the beautiful Jewess with all the tenderness and rapture of a first love.

Their interviews became more and more frequent, and Mary considered those few stolen hours as the happiest of her life, and she was very careful to hide the knowledge of them from her family, whose displeasure she dreaded.

Gradually, and almost unnoticed by her friends, her ardent nature had been aroused; and now that the tender feeling which the handsome Raphael had first inspired in her bosom had matured into the deepest love, the young girl had suddenly developed all the ardour of her passionate nature, she had become a loving woman of the south, whose passions nought can stay, and whose desires are the law of her being. Brought up in

solitude, and almost abandoned to her own devices, her ardent nature had made her vehement and reckless both in manner and speech; but she always had the great attraction of originality, and never having followed any rules but those of her own sanguine nature, a certain air of wild, uncontrolled, but charming and ever fresh nature, prevailed in all her actions. Her ways were bewitching, and only made her seem more beautiful. When she smiled her face brightened up as by a glow of sunshine, and her handsome countenance became almost divine. But, charming and beautiful as she appeared to all strangers, neither her brother nor her sister were capable of understanding her exuberant and excitable nature, which carried everything before it, and constituted her chief charm. They were utterly powerless to comprehend, and consequently to restrain, her peculiarly sanguine and spontaneous character, which was only ruled by her own impulses; they could only understand and admire the orthodox and conventional style of womanhood. They condemned her utter contempt for the useful and practical, and thought her natural inclinations for show and luxury both wicked and sinful.

This was the state of family affairs when, unfortunately for Mary, her father, who had been the only one who could sympathise with her in Bethany, died; leaving all his fortune to be divided equally amongst his three children.

Mary's grief knew no bounds, for she did not even know herself until the day she lost him how dearly she had loved the author of her days.

Eleazar was to be buried on his own estate, in a large tomb cut out of the rock which formed the boundary of the enormous orchard which lay at the back of the house. A great many Jews from Jerusalem and all the district around the capital came to the funeral to pay their last respects to their worthy old friend, who had now been carried to Abraham's bosom, as they one and all believed, being, as they were most of them, of the Pharisaic persuasion.

The proceedings were, however, conducted with the greatest modesty, and with as little show as possible, as if the dead man had been but a poor Jew of the smallest means. So you may imagine what was the astonishment of all present, when, at the moment the corpse was being borne into the grave, Mary advanced towards it holding an alabaster vase in her hands, which she broke when she approached the bier, and emptied the precious ointment it contained upon her father's body, filling the whole air with the delicious perfume of that, the most refreshing of all scents, the spikenard, which you, my dear Walter, so admired when at Seville.

Lazarus and Martha were shocked at this act of their younger sister, which they considered presumptuous and sinful; but some of their

friends were not quite so indignant against poor Mary, and a few even admired her pious action, and complimented her upon it, for, as they said, it testified to the great love she had borne her father. Amongst these was Raphael, who had come to the funeral, although he had never personally known the deceased, in order to console his beloved for the loss she had sustained.

His advances, and the manner in which they were received by Mary, did not pass unnoticed, in spite of the sorrow which naturally reigned on this mournful occasion, and Lazarus thought fit to ask his sister who this stranger was whom he did not know, and whom he had never seen before.

"He is a friend of mine," she answered laconically, for she was too much moved to say much more; but Lazarus, to whose mind the proprieties of life was the uppermost consideration, and who never forgot himself, not even when attending his father's funeral, did not approve of this, and remonstrated with her then and there.

"A Jewish maiden," he said, "should have no friends but those of her family; all others should be strangers to her."

Mary was too overwhelmed by her sorrow to take much heed of her brother's words, and let them pass unnoticed; although, when she heard them, the blood had rushed to her head, and her face had been for a moment suffused with indig-

nation at being thus rebuked for speaking to the man whom she loved above all others.

The day after the funeral I went at nightfall, as usual, with Mary to the well outside the village. Raphael was there already, awaiting our arrival; and, as on former occasions, he greeted us with his favourite expression, "May Jehovah bless you, beautiful Mary!" But the handsome Jewess was yet too deeply affected by her father's death even to listen to her lover; so she went straight to the well and tied her pitcher to the rope which hung over it.

"Happy you, Mary," went on the young man, seeing that his first salutation had obtained no answer. "Happy you, who can thus easily find the water with which to put an end to your thirst!"

"The water of this deep well is cool enough to extinguish the most devouring thirst," she answered, pretending not to have understood the real meaning of his words.

He sighed deeply, and then said—

"It can extinguish the thirst of my lips, but not that of my heart. . . . Ah, Mary! where shall I find the fountain of waters that will satisfy me for evermore?"

"You ask *me*, Raphael?"

"Yes; for who else should I ask but the adored being who alone possesses the power to prolong my life? . . . . Ah, my queen, can'st

thou not guess what I feel for thee? Since that day I met thee here by this well, I have only lived when in thy presence; the world is as nought to me without thee; I have dreamt day and night of thy matchless beauty; is it possible that your eyes are so modest that they cannot read all this in mine?"

Mary stared at him in mute astonishment; and yet, she might have expected this, and, if the truth were told, she had almost hoped for it; but now, that she saw him at her feet, now that at last he confessed his love for her, the thought of her dead father came upon her, the idea that he would have disapproved of this love made her dread those very words for which she would gladly have given her life a few days before. But Raphael, the man she loved above all others, was still on his knees before her; he had declared his love to her, and now that the ice was at last broken, he gave full flow to his romantic thoughts, which easily found expression in his rich and passionate language. He described to her the fire of his love, painting it in the brightest colours, he lauded to the skies the numerous charms with which nature had endowed her, until Mary's scruples were hushed, and the full power of her newly awakened vanity, which Raphael's words had at length aroused in her, took its natural place.

She could resist her feelings no longer now, the flames of love and vanity had burst forth all at

once in her heart, and her imagination and her reason were completely blinded by them.

"I love thee, Mary; I adore thee; wilt thou be mine," he exclaimed at last, taking her in his arms.

"I am thine, Raphael, I am thine;" she murmured without seeking to extricate herself from his embrace—at least so it seemed to me, who was patiently awaiting behind the trees the termination of this interview.

I could not explain to you the feelings which then took possession of me, for this was the very first time I was present at a love scene. I had heard of love, but I myself had never felt its supreme power; I had been a stranger until now to its influence, and that day for the first time I learnt to appreciate this contagious attraction, which, drawing two hearts to each other, makes of two beings one. But my spirit was too material and ignorant as yet to feel all its heavenly attractions. For love, the tender passion which alone means sympathy and self-devotion, is one that can only be felt by comparatively superior beings; at least by those whose planetary experience and education have enabled them at length to forget self, and feel for another what at first we can only feel for ourselves.

Raphael was the first to speak.

"This very night I will ask thy hand from thy brother."

"From my brother! . . . from Lazarus!" she

exclaimed. "Oh, never! Have I not told you already that I love thee, that I will be thine!"

"But we will need thy brother's consent, Mary; he is the head of thy family now, the representative of thy father."

"I will ask the consent of no one. I give myself freely to thee. I am my own mistress, and no one has a right to dispute my choice. Farewell for to-night, Raphael; I have promised I will be thine. . . . Farewell!"

IX.

"Adios hogar,
Adios familia,
Mi bien, mi alegria
Murieron en flor."
JUAN FLORAN.

WHEN we arrived home, we found Martha in the garden. She had been anxiously waiting our arrival, and was on the point of sending a servant after us, thinking something had happened.

When she enquired of Mary where we had been, she answered without vacillation, that she had been to the well to see young Raphael. Her sister was shocked at this, and began a long tirade, in which she set forth the impropriety of a young maiden holding converse alone with a man, and the scandal which it had already occasioned in the village, but Mary cut it all short by exclaiming in a commanding tone—

"I will have no more of this, sister. Am I not free to love and to hate, where I like, and as I choose?"

"What means this language, Mary? Have you forgotten whose daughter you are, and the respect and obedience which you owe to your

family? Your behaviour is highly unbecoming to a Jewish maiden, and you will have to answer for it to Lazarus, who to-day is the head of our house; we are not going to suffer a stain upon our honour, the honour of one of the first houses of Israel, through the eccentric behaviour of one such as you, I can tell you."

Mary raised her shoulders, as if in disgust.

"And I will answer your brother," she said, "as I have answered you. My father is dead, and with him I have buried all my relations. You and your brother are not more than I am in this house, and yet you pretend to be the masters, and would make of me a slave, as you have already monopolised all my servants. But I am Eleazar's daughter as well as you, and this house does not belong to you any more than it belongs to Lazarus; it belongs to the three."

I have already told you how different these two sisters were in every respect. All that Mary possessed of resolution and force of character, was in Martha pusillanimity and meekness. No wonder, then, that the poor woman should be so shocked by her sister's extraordinary conduct, and so abashed before her lofty and commanding spirit, which would know no bonds or ties of any kind. Yet, she loved Mary; and from all she could understand of her nature, she foresaw all the evil and unhappiness which must inevitably ensue from this course of conduct, but she alone

was hardly a match for her, so she went to Lazarus and declared to him the whole truth, although in the first instance she had made up her mind never to tell him of their sister's extraordinary behaviour.

He was deeply grieved when he heard this, for he too loved her in his own way, and her honour was the honour of his family; he accordingly sent for her, and in a tender, yet imposing tone, he apostrophised her in this way.

"Can it be true Mary, that you, a daughter of Abraham, should sink so low as to hold criminal parlance with a strange man! Your sister has told me what you have said, that you disowned your family, that you do not recognise my authority, but it is not your own honour alone that is in danger, it is the honour of my house that you would drag through the dust to be trampled upon by sin!"

These words made poor Mary tremble, for she felt all the weight of her brother's words, and stood with her eyes bent upon the ground, and her matchless tresses of golden hair hanging over her shoulders, a perfect picture of meekness and humility, which contrasted strangely with her natural character.

"You have dared, Mary," he continued, "to hold converse with a man from Jerusalem, perhaps an infidel, a Gentile, one of those tyrants who hold our country in bondage, and even if he were a

Jew, a true son of Abraham, your conduct could find no excuse in my eyes, therefore from this day the doors of this house will be shut upon you, and henceforth you will not even behold him whom you call your lover, even from your own window, and the day will come, Mary, when you will thank me for this."

"I a prisoner!" exclaimed my friend, her fierce spirit once more aroused. "A prisoner, and in my own house! You can command in the house, brother, but not upon my person."

"Do you ignore the titles I have for so doing!"

"I do not recognise them."

"But you will have to obey them, as must all who live in my house."

"Whose is this house?"

"Mine, for our father in dying commended it to my care, and his last words were that I and my family should live in it in the paths of honour and virtue, as he and his family had lived in it before me."

"Ah!"

"The honour of my family was commended to my care; if you cannot lead a proper, virtuous, and becoming life, as did our blessed mother, and does your excellent sister, I will teach you. . . ."

"And what do you call a proper, virtuous, and becoming life! I am sure the life we lead is neither becoming to our station nor to our wealth. If this is your house . . ."

"Can you doubt it?"

"I might, but I do not choose to do so. If this is your house, I say I will go out of it, for you have taken care to let me see often enough that you are the master here, and I will be my sole mistress. I want, therefore, that the division of our property may be made as soon as possible, as our father commanded; and that the part that may be mine should be passed over to me; I will not sleep another night in *your* house!"

There was something so dreadfully determined in her tone that Lazarus could only bow his head and agree to her sudden determination.

"So let it be. But where do you intend taking up your abode; surely you will not live alone; it would be improper for a Jewish maiden to lay herself thus open to the malice of men."

"In the province of Galilee, and by the Sea of Tiberias, there is an old castle which belonged to our mother, the castle of Magdala. Neither you nor Martha care for it, therefore I should desire it may be allotted to me, and there I will in future live with my uncle Simon."

"With Simon! You forget, Mary, the dreadful malady with which he is accursed; you would not inhabit the same house with him!"

"I only remember that he is my uncle, and that he once loved me. I am not like you, who would forget a friend in distress. Besides, leprosy, horrible as it is, is not contagious; you know as

well as I do that it does not spread by the touch."

"But our law, Mary, obliges lepers to remain apart from other men; you will not break through all the blessed laws of our nation that have made us what we are? Leprosy, my sister—for thus I must call you still—is a punishment from God; it is nothing short of a living death, a poisoning of the springs, a corrupting of all the rivers of life, a dissolution by slow degrees of the whole body; it is the very prototype of the foulness and defilement of sin."

"I will never believe my uncle to be a sinner; whatever he may have been in a former existence (as the Pharisees would say), in this life at least he has proved himself a righteous and honest man. I will go to him and nurse him; and sinner as I am, I will not abandon the poor and miserable in their distress; I will shame you all, wicked and degraded as you may think me."

This resolution of Mary's was taken all in a moment, as all she undertook was generally wont to be, for she was a creature of impulse, and with all her faults had a far better heart than was generally attributed to her. There was something too like defiance in this action—a defiance against the Mosaic law—that pleased her, for she delighted in finding faults in that law that found so many in her conduct. So she determined to go to Galilee and live with her uncle, leper

as he was, and nothing on earth could have made her change her determination.

That very evening she told me of her plan, and asked me to accompany her. I readily agreed to do so, for I was heartily tired of Bethany and its society; and when she had done speaking she took out her ink-horn, which she always wore hanging at her waist, as the ladies of to-day wear their chatelaines, and, taking a roll of vellum and a reed pen, she wrote a few lines upon it, holding it all the time in her hand. When she had finished she gave it to me, and asked me to take it myself to Raphael's house in Jerusalem. These were the contents:—"In the province of the Sun, the most beautiful of the earth, and by the Sea of Galilee, there is a castle; its name is Magdala, and it is situated on the western shore; there will she whom thou lovest take up her abode, and there will she receive thee."

But the morning dawn is already lighting the landscape, and bringing the cupola of San Antonio into view. Farewell, Walter, farewell! I have outstayed my time, and my angelic companions beckon me to the pure ether of the skies. Adieu! To-morrow I will be with you once more; so let me say with Juliet, "Wait but a little, I will come again."

NIGHT THE SIXTH.

——o——

"No wonder, Mary, that thy story
Touches all hearts—for there we see
The soul's corruption and its glory,
Its death and life combined in thee."

MOORE.

I.

> "That people once
> So famed, whom God Himself vouchsafed to call
> His chosen race, and with a guardian hand
> Deigned to protect."
>
> HAYES.

"THE sun was shedding its last rays over the land of Israel, and the golden tints of day were already fast giving place to the more sombre grey of the evening; the sun had sunk below the western hills, yet still gilded them with his last rays, as if unwilling to depart, and the imposing eminence of Mount Moriah glittered amidst the fast spreading darkness, with its golden temple, which rose towards the sky from the shades which already covered the lower part of the city, like the sun itself from the ever-rolling waves of the ocean.

And well might the great city, spread out before us at this moment, be compared to a sea, for like the heaving waves of its prototype, the ever-rolling billows of human passions were constantly agitating the holy Jerusalem.

Jerusalem, the city of God that was so soon to be destroyed and levelled to the ground, stood

upon Sion in all its glory and all its beauty, the proud capital of a proud nation.

Around it were stretched in every direction the three walls which fortified it on almost all sides with their many towers, and over them arose the three hills, the two principal ones on which the city itself was built, were opposite to each other. The upper market-place, or citadel, as it was called by David, was the highest; and the lower city stood upon Mount Acra on the other side of the pleasant valley, which ran between the two hills, and extended as far as Siloam. By the side of Mount Acra stands Mount Moriah, where Abraham sacrificed, where Solomon built his temple, and where the Mosque of Omer rises to-day to shame alike the Jews and the Christians. Anciently, this hill was lower than the others, but the Asamoneans joined it to the city by filling up the valley that lay between with earth, and thus almost succeeded in joining the city to the temple, and ever since then, Acra has been gradually reduced in height, but in the days of which I am speaking, the temple of Herod rose high above the lower city and formed the most attractive and imposing feature of the general panorama. Thus Jerusalem, built on the top of elevated hills, was encircled by walls and surrounded on all sides by deep valleys and ravines.

But let us pass the gates and enter the town

itself. The day, with all its cares and labours, was at an end, and the numerous inhabitants of the busy city were fast seeking their homes. The streets were almost deserted, except by a few Roman soldiers, who were lazily returning to their quarters; but in one part of the city there was still great animation and life; the square before a large and imposing house, evidently the residence of some important Jew, was full of idlers and stall-keepers, who contributed to form almost a crowd, which was continually increased by passing loiterers, who seemed to find an irresistible attraction before that house, for they all stopped in the square before it as if they were anxiously awaiting some extraordinary sight.

There seemed also to be great animation going on inside the dwelling, for floods of light issued from the narrow windows, and every now and then richly dressed ladies and busy servants were seen passing between the lights and the curious eyes of the observers outside. A great feast was evidently going on, and to it, most likely, were repairing two Roman soldiers, who, covering their glittering armour with their long capes, were making their way, as soldiers only can do, through the crowd towards the palatial residence before them.

Let us approach them and hear what they are saying.

"Oh, Martinian, that I should live to witness

this day! Why did I ever leave my home and my country to become the slave of such a passion; why did I ever see her, and once seeing her, why did not I drop dead at her feet sooner than live on and see her become the wife of another!"

"By Jove, Sartorius, if you feel her loss so deeply, why do you come to her wedding?"

"Because I must see her once more before she is completely lost to me; because I must see the ceremony with my own eyes before I can make up my mind to believe it."

"I could never have supposed you capable of such a passion, although I must confess the Jewess is a lovely little creature, and if what I have heard be true, her betrothed is a horrible old Jew, one of those who lend money in the temple yonder; a miser and a usurer as well as a Jew. I suppose he is as rich as their king Solomon, of whom they are always speaking, when she can prefer him to you."

"And what is it to me," went on the disconsolate lover, "even if he is as rich as Solomon, and as wise, and as handsome! She will never love him—never."

"Are you so sure of that, Sartorius?"

"Do you think the girl is mad to love an old Jew, after having loved a Roman centurion?"

"By Jupiter, you are not vain! Ah! ah! But you have no idea yet, my young friend, of

woman's powers of loving. Woman, you must know, is a strange animal: her existence is love, but her love changes with the wind, and is as fickle; no one can ever tell from which quarter the wind will blow. I believe that what those heavenly creatures love, is not so much their lovers as love itself. Cupid is the god of all women, for they are alike all over the world, be they Jews, Egyptians, Persians, Romans, or Britons. Adonis may be their idol to-day, Apollo to-morrow, and Mars the day after, but these are only mediums through whom they worship the god of gods—Cupid—who was himself the son of a coquette."

The young soldier, whom I shall in future call Martinian, smiled at his friend's tirade, and after some minutes, during which they made several vain attempts to cross the square, he said,—

"Your speech, Sartorius, sounds very learned, but I am convinced that, at least, in one case it won't hold true. I am as convinced that Mariamne loves me, as any man can be of woman's love. You know that when, two years ago, we left together the glorious shores of our native Tiber, I had the same opinion of women that you still entertain; I had loved, or thought I had loved, many women; I had heard them swear eternal love thousands of times, and I suppose I did the same, and yet, when I left

Rome, my heart was as free as yours, which is saying a great deal; I took all women to be alike vain and foolish, consummate hypocrites, who only cared for the pleasure of the moment, but since those days I have changed my opinion of their sex. The beautiful and pure maiden who lives in that house has taught me to appreciate women for what they are worth. Ah, Martinian! I love that girl more than I can tell you, and to think that I must lose her—lose her for ever! Ah! do you know that it almost makes me wish I had been born a Jew, that I might marry her? In sober earnest, Martinian, I would gladly give away my rights of a Roman citizen, to become the husband of Mariamne."

His friend only laughed at this discourse, and said something about its being fortunate that such an exchange could not be made.

A few seconds afterwards they had entered the house where I shall take the liberty to follow them, for you know, dearest Walter, that for us free spirits, there can be no secrets, for our sight can penetrate all material obstacles, and view every object and every action in its true light, even from the distant stars of the Milky Way, thousands upon thousands of miles distant from your little earth.

The house to which I am now going to take you was a large mansion, situated in the richest quarter of Jerusalem, of which city it was one of

the finest residences. On this occasion it was most beautifully decorated and brilliantly lighted; for a marriage feast was going to take place in it, and you know the important position that these ceremonies held in the old Jewish times.

The spacious hall, as well as the great court-yard which lay behind it, was tastefully decorated with flowers, while hundreds of silver lamps, suspended from the marble galleries, served to turn the old house into a perfect paradise. But the centre of attraction was in the great saloon beyond the court-yard, where a canopy had been erected for the ceremony which was so soon to be solemnized, and round which the numerous friends and relations of the bride and bridegroom were already grouped.

In a little chamber up-stairs, whose large ever-open windows gave access to that hanging garden at the top of the house, so indispensable to all Eastern homes, was the bride, surrounded by her young friends and favourite slaves, preparing herself for the ceremony that was so soon to change her whole existence.

Behold a beautiful creature of scarcely fifteen summers, so that even in the east she was a very young bride; she was a brunette, and had long black hair, which hung in loose ringlets under her marriage crown of white linen, over which she wore a beautiful tiara of precious stones, the brilliancy of which could scarcely outshine her

bright beaming eyes, which were of that long almond shape that the Spanish poets so delight in giving to their heroines. She was beautiful in every way, and yet a certain air of melancholy overshadowed her perfect features, and her eyes, naturally so beautiful, were to-day downcast, and the eyelids swollen, as if she had been weeping, as indeed one might suppose, when one remarked her long and glossy eyelashes, which still retained the moisture of recent tears. Her mouth, too, that little rosebud, which seemed only made to smile, and whose sweet little dimples varied slightly on either side, exhibited that day but a melancholy smile, which was all the sadder when she tried to look pleased, and laugh. It was evident that she was unhappy, and that the marriage in which she was to play the principal part was not of her choice.

She was splendidly attired in a long flowing robe of a soft and delicate texture, richly embroidered in silver and pearls, and as she stood in the midst of her young companions, the most beautiful of them all, as well as the most richly adorned, one might easily have taken her for one of those beautiful virgins whom the old Mexicans used to sacrifice to their gods, to appease their anger, or win some new favours at their hands; and indeed she did look like a victim on her way to the altar, such were the unmistakable signs of

weariness and misery which were pictured on that beautiful countenance.

Finding the little chamber too warm, the lovely bride stepped into the garden outside, which had been planted on the top of the lower story, and she requested her companions to let her remain there alone, and these, who one and all seemed to pity their young friend from the depth of their hearts, acceded to her request.

Night had now fairly set in, and with it the ever soft and balmy air of the surrounding mountains came to soothe the young girl in her grief with its refreshing breeze, which she inhaled with avidity, as if she fain would fly with it away from that home and the man who was so soon to be her husband. The moon too, that soothing and kind companion of the sad, had now risen, and its silver rays traversing the cloudless blue sky above fell upon the sleeping city, lighting now a turret, now a grove, until it was lost towards the west, behind the great obscure mass of the tower of Antonia and Mount Olivet which rose high behind the temple.

Upon this roof, which commanded such a fine panorama of the city, the tender care of a father had arranged a parterre of the most beautiful flowers, with nooks and arbours, decorated with leaves and blossoms of every description, where a pleasant shade could be found during the hottest hours of the day. Around it, there was a high

parapet of stone, which formed the top of the façade outside, and looked over the square in front of the building.

The young girl took her seat upon this parapet, and with her eyes fixed upon the crowded square below, she remained for some time lost in a deep reverie. Suddenly the noise of merry music inside the house brought her back to the sad reality, and she burst into a torrent of warm, passionate tears, which seemed to relieve her bosom after the cruel smiles of indifference with which she had, until then, been obliged to hide her true feelings.

When she again looked up, the shadow of a man stood between her and the silver-like reflection of the cloudless moon. She started up, and the next moment found herself in the arms of her former lover, Sartorius, the Roman centurion, whom we followed across the square.

For a long time they remained clasped in each other's embrace, the steel-covered arms of the soldier forming a chain around her slight waist, while her tender and graceful form lay pressed to his manly breast.

"Ah, Mariamne. My lovely Mariamne," he said at last, his voice trembling with emotion, "so thou wilt go from me for ever? So thou wilt give thyself away to another?"

"*I* give myself away! Ah, Sartorius! if you knew all, you would feel more pity for me;

but know, that though the wife of another, thy remembrance can never be effaced from my heart; I have loved thee, ah! God alone knows how much, but time has proved I did but too fondly dream—it was all a dream—a happy, happy dream. Oh, let us forget it, Sartorius, as best we can . . . . away, deceitful dream, away!"

"You ask me to forget thee, Mariamne, thee whom I so love! Oh impossible, impossible, you say you love me, and with the same breath you bid me forget you; do you think I have no heart in my breast? for with those words of love you only increase my desires and strengthen my sufferings. Oh, ye gods! alter my fate, or else change my heart!"

"Thou shouldst pray to Jehovah, Sartorius. He alone can hear thy prayer."

"To Jehovah! to that cruel God of yours who is the sole cause of all our sufferings—to that unnatural and unjust god, who delights in torturing his children, and calls himself an angry and jealous god, who will not let two hearts be united by the ties of matrimony when they happen to be of different religions, though he unites them in affection and in love. I pray to that God? Ah, Mariamne, no, no, not even *you* can persuade me to do that."

Suddenly the young girl sprung out of the centurion's arms, and stood erect before him enveloped in her long bridal veil, her numerous

jewels sparkling in the moon-light like so many glittering stars.

"Revile not my God!" she exclaimed, almost fiercely. "Thou must go," she added, in a tremulous voice. "Thy presence here this night might ruin me for ever. Behind that arbour there is a stair, at the bottom of it thou wilt find a door which will let you out into the street; go, go, or I should never be able to go through the ceremony."

"You speak of that accursed ceremony when I swear to thee an eternal fidelity, when I am ready to die for thee."

"Oh, Sartorius, stop, stop, I am still a virgin though in the habiliments of a bride."

"Yes; your hair is perfumed with the roses of Jericho, and your bosom is adorned with the jewels he has given you, but in your heart, in that heart which still beats for me, in spite of all the weight of jewellery with which they have tried to smother it, you are not a bride, for your countenance gives the lie to that cursed veil, which is but the base price of pride and infamy."

"Do not curse this poor veil, for hidden under it I may, perhaps, conceal my sorrow and my tears. Oh Jehovah! with mercy such as thou used to bestow upon the daughters of Israel, hear the prayer that I offer thee in my trouble!"

"If that God you invoke be a God indeed, let him save you from the traitor's hands, and aid

me in protecting this poor victim of selfish pride from the grasp of the wicked. You say that through that arbour there is a stair which leads into the street . . . come, then, through it with me; let us abandon this house and the bridegroom who awaits thee below, and in a distant land seek that happiness which thy cruel and unnatural father denies thee."

"To fly, to fly away! Ah, Sartorius, you know not what you propose; accursed by heaven, despised by all, no house would give us shelter, no shore would harbour us from God's rage, and, tossed by the winds and broken by tempests, our heads would never find rest. Wandering and miserable, at war with God and man, where should we find repose? No corner of the earth, however distant, would give us shelter; cursed during our lives, cursed after death, misery alone would be our everlasting punishment."

The handsome Roman stood erect before her, with his arms crossed upon his breastplate, which shone like a mirror when the rays of the moon fell upon it, and two tears stole from his eyes, leaving a deep trace behind them upon his manly cheek. To love that beautiful being, and to be forced to fly from her,—to love her, and to see her wedded to another, was indeed more than any man could have borne. But she commanded him to go, and he felt he must obey her, for he well knew that for her the ancient customs of

her race and its peculiar laws were half her existence. But he would not give her up without one last effort.

"You see that dark building there, beyond the temple, it is the tower of Antonia, and the headquarters of Pilate's army, there we shall be safe, the grand priest of Venus will unite us for evermore, and thou wilt be mine. Come, come Mariamne, is it possible that you prefer a fancied duty to my love?"

A change came suddenly over her countenance, she turned pale, and her beautiful eyes met his, but her hesitation only lasted a second, for it went as soon as it had come, and now a deep crimson covered her burning cheeks. One might have thought that she was ashamed of the idea which had for a moment possessed her. With a firm step she sprang to the parapet, which alone protected the terrace from the square below, and, with all the agility of her extreme youth, she leaped upon it.

"If thou wilt not go, tempter," she exclaimed, "I'll throw myself headlong into the street. As I live, I'll do it; there is the stair, go! . . . go!"

Sartorius said no more; he looked at her in silence, and, with a slow but firm step, he gained the arbour she had indicated, and disappeared behind the jasmines which concealed the staircase.

When he had gone, she came down from her elevated but dangerous position, went straight

to the arbour and locked the door, but she had not strength for more, and she sank fainting upon the marble pavement, clasping the key to her breast.

When her young friends came to look for her they found her still lying in the arbour, and it was only after some time, and thanks to the restoratives which they made her inhale, that she at last recovered, and was carried, in a half unconscious state, into the great saloon, where her father and her bridegroom had awaited her arrival with much impatience.

A contract was then read, stipulating the conditions of the marriage, and the most observant of the many persons present noticed that the bridegroom's small eyes sparkled when mention was made of her enormous wealth. He was a middle-aged man, of large proportions, this Benjamin Ben Isaac, with a long reddish beard which reached to his waist; he was rather poorly, nay almost meanly adorned for such an occasion; which circumstance coincided perfectly with the character attributed to him generally by the young men of Jerusalem, to whom he used to lend sums of money at considerable interest. But he was a leading Jew, come of a very good family, and enormously rich, so that the pride of Naphtali was gratified in every way by this marriage for his daughter.

Mariamne's father stood just behind her under

the silken canopy erected in the centre of the room; he at all events was most gorgeously apparelled, and felt prouder than ever—so proud, indeed, that his behaviour was offensive to Annas, the high-priest, who was there with his family, and who was also a very pompous man, and one of great influence, as Josephus tells us in his History of the Jews.

But the marriage was solemnised at last by the Rabbi in attendance, and after having broken the glass which indicated that the covenant was concluded, and that Mariamne was for ever wedded to Ben Isaac, the company retired in procession to the illuminated garden, where a sumptuous supper awaited them.

This festival was a long affair, and a very wearisome one for the poor bride, who reclined on the same couch with her husband, and ate out of the same plate with him, according to the Eastern custom. But all things in this world come to an end sooner or later, and at last, when the first rays of the morning sun were already gilding the Eastern sky, Ben Isaac conducted his bride to her new home in a brilliant and gay procession, which was accompanied by torches and dancing-girls, who played soft music all the way.

All was mirth and gladness around them, all seemed happy and joyful, except the poor bride, who sat motionless on her horse, and wept bitterly under her bridal veil.

II.

"Though new the frame
Thy soul inhabits now, I've tracked its flame
For many an age, in every chance and change
Of that existence through whose varied range,
As through a torch-race, where, from hand to hand,
The flying youths transmit their shining brand,
From frame to frame the unextinguished soul
Rapidly passes, till it reach the goal."

T. MOORE.

I FEAR the foregoing events, my dear Walter, need an explanation; for no doubt you believe the characters I have introduced in my history to be new, when, if you were aware of the whole truth, you would discover them to be your oldest and most beloved friends.

I have already told you many times that true love is never lost, and that those who so curiously seem to be attracted towards us have been linked with us, through former existences, by ties far more ancient than you can imagine while on the earth, where only one small part of your existence is revealed to you.

You know now that it requires several lives on earth before anything like sympathy and true devotion can be arrived at between two spirits. Thus you have seen how in Central India we were

thrown together about 2500 years ago, and can understand that an acquaintance thus unfavourably begun, could not continue without expiation. Like all things, it was destined to progress, and since then we have been constantly incarnated side by side, and side by side we have lived through countless ages, until our love has become what it is.

Now the Roman centurion, of whom I have been speaking to you this evening, was no other than your own self; and in like manner the beautiful Jewish girl, Mariamne, was she whom in your previous existence had loved you so well, the gentle and devoted Pastophora, and the same whom, in this your present earth life, bore you in her bosom with unselfish maternal love . . . . your own dear Mother.

Thus you see the true mystery of love, and that it is an endless chain of affection that binds us to one another, and has made us what we are.

But this is not all; that other Roman soldier whom I have called Martinian, and who played such an important part in our spirit's history, was no other than he who in the present is our own dear child, the fruit of our earthly love—our Raphael, whom we have both so loved in the past, and who has sought us once more to continue his career of progress by your side.

Oh love him, dear husband—love him for his own sake as well as for mine, for he has always

been your friend and companion through the ages, and it is sympathy and affection that has once more drawn him to your side.

But I must return to my history, or the night will wane before I have half done, and I have yet very much to tell you . . . Ah, Walter! I am so glad that you forget all your past, and that you cannot recall any of your former existences; for thus I can go over them all once more with you, and live again by your side in that past which has been so dear to our spirits.

But enough of this. Two years before the unhappy wedding of poor Mariamne, you had left Rome with Martinian, (now our darling, Raphael, then a young man like yourself, and your chosen friend and companion) to join the Roman army in Judea, under the governor of the province, Pontius Pilate.

The principal post of the Roman army was at Cæsarea, on the sea-coast of Samaria, but during the great Jewish festivals at Jerusalem, the governor and his troops took up their abode in that city, so that by his presence he might prevent any disturbances arising from the gathering together of so many people.

Caius Sartorius and Martinian (you must excuse me, dearest Walter, if I speak of you in the third person, and call you by the name you then bore, for I am obliged to do so in order to render my history intelligible and consistent) were both

centurions, that is to say, officers, for although literally the word "centurion" means the captain of a hundred men, it was used generally as meaning "an officer," without regard to the actual number of men he might command. Caius Sartorius and Martinian, I repeat, were thus centurions in the Roman army, and as such, were obliged to repair to the capital whenever the companies to which they belonged moved thither.

During one of their sojourns at Jerusalem, which took place at the time of the great Jewish Feast of the Tabernacles, the two young men became acquainted with a very rich Jew, by name Nephtali, who had an only daughter, whose beauty, according to all accounts, excelled all description and surpassed all imagination.

From the very first Mariamne and Sartorius felt irresistibly drawn to each other, a feeling which they could hardly explain to themselves, having forgotten all the ties that had linked them together in their previous existence. Their love was therefore at first sight, as loves of this kind generally appear to be, and in less than a week the Jewish maiden and the Roman soldier had become the most devoted of lovers.

Caius Sartorius lost no time in asking her hand from her father, but Nephtali was a proud and stubborn Jew, who despised foreigners, and had a perfect hatred of the Romans, who then governed his country, to his great indignation. He

therefore received the young centurion's proposal with the greatest disdain, and simply answered by a quotation from the Bible to the effect that "the chosen people should neither seek bride nor bridegroom amongst the heathen nations."

He remonstrated with his daughter, whom, however, he fondly loved, about this passing infatuation, as he chose to call it, and as the best way of putting an end to it at once, he determined to marry her as soon as possible to some Jew, worthy by his position and means, of becoming his child's husband, and the successor to his property.

But the young girl's love was not to be so easily eradicated; a love that had been so powerful in her previous existence as to have made her capable of sacrificing her own life for another, could not be thus smothered at the bidding of a proud, worldly-minded father. But he, regardless of her unhappiness, would not hearken to her prayers, nor listen to her sobs, nor even be moved by her tears.

"Thou, a daughter of Israel must not throw thyself away upon one of thy country's bitterest enemies. I would rather see thee dead, my child, than wedded to a heathen dog."

At last, after a little search, he found a bridegroom after his own heart in Benjamin Isaac, a middle-aged Jew, enormously rich, to whom he himself proposed this marriage, and offered forthwith his daughter's hand.

Ben Isaac was a money lender, and consequently avaricious in the extreme. In spite of the enormous wealth which it was supposed he possessed, he lived almost in misery, and denied himself all the pleasures of life to add a few obolus to his hidden treasure. No wonder, therefore, that he received Nephtali's proposal with the greatest marks of joy, for Mariamne was his only child, and would naturally inherit his enormous wealth. For her loveliness and her tender youth he did not in the least care; that beautiful girl who had turned half the young men's heads of Jerusalem, was for him only the money bill which would bring him in due time a second fortune to add to his own. He thus eagerly counted her darics, not her charms.

Nephtali felt that a great weight had fallen from his shoulders when this betrothment had been finally arranged, and he considered that his daughter's happiness was secured with this worthy old Jew for a husband, his own mission accomplished, and his great duty as a father performed, when he had found such a wealthy and noble husband for his Mariamne. Ah! he little knew what marriage really means, and the mutual trials of affection which must first precede it, without which this sacrament, instituted by God and one of the holiest and purest of His laws, is turned into the most criminal and abominable of earthly bargains. But what could he know of love, or of

sympathy? He was a worldly-minded man, the spiritual side of whose nature was undeveloped, and who had never thought of, or pondered on better things, or known aught but the limited and narrow-minded ideas peculiar to his calling?

The union of man and wife should be one of love and sympathy, although men have unhappily turned it into a worldly alliance, according to the desires of their nature. It should be first of all spiritual, and should have its origin, as it will have its eternal duration, in the spiritual world. They who make an earthly object of it, sin against heaven and against God, for they smother the sentiments of their better nature to listen to the worldly voice of their selfish instincts. They sacrifice the noblest sentiments of their hearts to the interested calculations of their worldly-minded brains.

Mariamne's father in seeking a husband for his daughter, was completely guided by the spirit of his proud and grasping race, and attended only to the material precept of his law; forgetting completely the great moral harm that he was doing her, and the evils which later on, it would certainly occasion, and which would greatly outweigh, even in a worldly point of view, the advantages which he fondly thought to obtain for her. And yet he loved her, for she was his only child, and he would gladly have sacrificed his own life for hers! but then, he was blinded, as so many

others are to this very day, by the narrow-minded prejudices of race and society, and, to prevent one evil, fell into a much greater one.

When Mariamne was first introduced to her future husband, she was overcome with disgust and repulsion, and could not help comparing him with the handsome young Roman who loved her so well. But time, by degrees, effaced this first impression that had made her proposed husband appear so odious in her eyes, and when the much-dreaded day of the marriage came, she met it with all the courage of a self-sacrificing heroine, and that fatal hour found her completely resigned to her sad fate ; for she too, like her father, bowed humbly before the arbitrary customs of her race, and, like him, was an innocent victim of its requirements and its superstitions. It was not, therefore, so much the sense of obedience which she owed to her father that made her shrink from Sartorius's proposed flight, as that sense of duty to the conventionalities of Jewish society which was so developed even in her pure and innocent breast. Ah ! if society could but answer for all the evils it produces with its narrow-minded views and common-place morals !

Mariamne became, like so many others, a victim to society, for, rather than brave its animadversions, she obeyed her father in this, as in everything else, and the only opposition which he

ever discovered in her, was in her mute and silent, but bitter sorrow, which haunted him for many a night after that fatal one, in which, after the marriage feast, she had left his home for another, as I have already described.

III.

'Know ye the land where the cypress and myrtle
Are emblems of deeds that are done in their clime;
Where the rage of the vulture, the love of the turtle
Now melt into sorrow, now madden to crime?
Know ye the land of the cedar and vine,
Where the flowers ever blossom, the beams ever shine;
Where the light wings of zephyr oppressed with perfume,
Wax faint o'er the gardens of Gul in her bloom;
Where the citron and olive are fairest of fruit,
And the voice of the nightingale never is mute;
Where the tints of the earth and the hues of the sky
In colour though varied, in beauty may vie,
And the purple of ocean is deepest in dye;
Where the virgins are soft as the roses they twine,
And all, save the spirit of man, is divine?
'Tis the clime of the east; 'tis the land of the sun—
Can he smile on such deeds as his children have done?
Oh! wild as the accents of lover's farewell
Are the hearts which they bear, and the tales which they tell."

LORD BYRON.

IN a little ante-chamber adjoining the great banqueting hall in Nephtali's house, our friend Martinian was reclining upon a couch anxiously awaiting Caius Sartorius's return, and amusing himself, in the meantime, by trying to catch the little golden fish which were swimming about in the marble fountain in the centre of the room. His thoughts seemed to be far away, for at the

slightest noise from the adjoining rooms, he grasped his long Roman dagger with his strong hand as if he dreaded some approaching danger.

He was a true Roman, of manly frame and perfect feature, while that air of dignity and distinction which so characterised the conquerors of the old world was expressed in every movement of his athletic body. He had a martial air and a penetrating expression in his countenance which was bronzed by the sun of many eastern campaigns; a general look of conscious power and command revealed itself in all his person. As he thus lay in the centre of that small apartment, playing with his sword, he might easily have been taken for Mars himself, that god-like prototype of his god-like race.

On this occasion, he seemed really concerned at his friend's prolonged absence, for he loved him well, and when Sartorius at last made his appearance, a look of relief seemed to light up his countenance which completely changed its expression.

The two men stood for some moments anxiously regarding each other without speaking, as if they would first divine each other's thoughts, but at last Martinian broke this oppressive silence, but only with a single inquiring word.

"Well? . . ."

This gave relief to the poor lover, who, falling on his companion's breast, burst into a flood

of passionate, incoherent words, intermingled with sobs and tears, contrasting intensely with his steel covered frame, which spoke of a sterner and more self-commanding nature.

"All is lost. . . . She is gone from me for ever. . . . She has decided to be his."

In vain Martinian tried to calm him and offer him some consolation, however common place; he would not be comforted.

"Cheer up, dear friend, cheer up, she is not worthy of those tears."

"Not worthy!" quoth Sartorius. "Oh! Martinian, would to Jupiter she were not, for then I could forget her; but she is a goddess, too good, too pure even for Olympus. It is *I* who am not worthy of her. I who would sacrifice her for my own selfish love."

"And she prefers the wealth of the old Jew to your love; and she marries him when she loves you?"

"Ah, Martinian! she is forced to do it. She hates his millions, I assure you, as much as she hates the man."

"But she would not fly with you all the same, as any Roman woman would have done in her place."

"She is not a Roman, my friend, she is a Jewess, and Jewish to the very last."

"Oh, the accursed race! Shall I ever understand them? There is something most mysteri-

ous in their character that affects all their actions. At one and the same moment they are the vilest and the noblest, the most splendid and the most avaricious, the bravest and the most abject nation of all those that go to form this empire. I must confess that, with their peculiar laws, their one jealous and cruel God, and their contradictory morals, they are a problem I shall never solve."

"And I should never advise you, my friend, to solve it as I have done; for the passions which that race can inspire are such as naught can overcome, naught can extinguish; they are enthralling, and can make of a man at once the happiest and the most miserable being in existence."

"Let us leave them, Sartorius. I dare say Pilate will not refuse us leave of absence. Let us quit Jerusalem, it is the only way to cure your madness; you must do away with it, or it will do away with you. Mariamne is lost now, she is by this time old Isaac's wife, and will soon forget you; let us forget her too. After all, what is that foolish girl to you, a noble Roman, a centurion of her glorious army? There are plenty of beautiful women besides Mariamne, who would only be too happy to call you their master. Who thinks of marriage at your age? Have you ever heard of the Magdalene?"

"The Magdalene . . . let me try to recollect. Ah, yes, I know now; that woman who created

such scandal the other day in the Tetrarchy of Antipas?"

"The same, she is a charming woman, a perfect goddess, and not like your Mariamne, over strict in her views of Jewish propriety. Let us go to her, I dare say she will soon make you forget that weak-minded, foolish girl. Galilee is a beautiful country, a perfect paradise, you must leave this very night. I will see the Governor and ask him for the required licence; but I will not leave you alone one moment, Martinian, for just now you are mad, and therefore you are dangerous. Heaven knows what you would do if I were to leave you. . . . Come, come, dear fellow, out of this accursed house. Oh, by Jupiter! I swear to you that this night will hereafter be impressed upon your mind more vividly than you imagine."

Sartorius was too low spirited at the moment to offer any resistance to his friend's determined mood, so he followed him in silence to Herod's Palace, where the Roman Governor was then residing, and from thence after having obtained the necessary licence, to quit Jerusalem, to Martinian's chambers in the Tower of Antonia overlooking the temple, where they sat up half the night making preparations for their hurried journey.

The sun had hardly risen on the morrow, when our two friends, mounted on their magnificent

chargers, might have been seen descending the steep slopes outside the gates, on the side of the new city of Bezetha. They passed to the left of the royal caverns, and rode on in silence as far as the valley of Jehoshaphat, at the bottom of which they crossed the Kedron, and were soon out of sight of the yet sleeping city behind them.

The journey across Judea and Samaria is a long, wearisome one, uninteresting at any time, and much more so to our two friends, who were unacquainted with even the most memorable events of Jewish history, and who cared very little for Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

At last they reached Nazareth, where they turned towards the east by the new road which led to Tiberias, close under Mount Tabor.

A few more miles, and another ridge of mountains brought them to the ancient patrimony of the tribe of Nephtali. From these high hills, which seem to surround the Sea of Tiberias in every direction, the fertile and ever-smiling valleys of Galilee burst upon their sight for the first time.

At their feet lay the verdant meadows of which Josephus says that "their soil is universally rich and fruitful, and full of plantations of trees of all sorts, insomuch that it invites the most slothful to take pains in its cultivation by its fruitfulness; accordingly it is all cultivated by its inhabitants,

and no part of it lies idle." One really wonders to-day, on beholding those deserted plains, which oblige one to calculate three days in advance where one will find water to drink, what has become of that glorious vegetation, what can have changed the mild climate, and what can have driven away the numerous clouds which in former times sheltered Galilee from the burning sun over-head? You will therefore hardly believe me, dearest Walter, when I compare the scene that lay before our two heroes to the fertile and rich *vega of Granada.* In front of them, and beyond the green meadows of Galilee, was spread in all directions the Lake of Tiberias, also called the Sea of Galilee, with its blue waves, upon which the white sails of the numerous boats shone in the sun-light like so many birds resting upon the waters, dipping their snowy plumage into its azure depths. At each end of the lake were the two branches of the Jordan lost in the horizon amongst green fields and rocky mountains.

Around the lake lay the numerous little towns and villages which have since become so famous, that we could hardly find a child in civilised Europe who has not heard of Capernaum, Bethsaida, Magdala, Dalmanutha, Gorgosa, Chorazin, Gennesareth; and close under the road of our travellers lay the city of Tiberias, the largest as well as the newest of the towns around the lake, mirrored upon its transparent waters, and inviting

them with her handsome houses and delicious shades to enter her walls.

Beyond the lake rose the high mountains belonging to the tetrarchy of Philip, the capital of which, Cesarea Philippi, lay just behind them on the road to Damascus. Those mountains rose one over the other in bold outline against the cloudless sky, and their bright colouring ranged from the bright yellow of the nearest ones, to the faintest blue of the most distant snow-covered peaks. The panorama, thus beheld from the hills around Mount Tabor, was one which once seen, as that of the Vega of Granada—to which I have before compared it—can never be forgotten; it is indeed strange, therefore, that that which man's memory could never forget, benign nature seems so completely to have forgotten!

But how can I picture to you with mere words scenes which the heart alone can comprehend! I might as well speak to you at once of the heavenly scenery which now surrounds me, and of my celestial home. You must see these things, Walter, for yourself, before you can form an idea of them, although, if you want to see Galilee as I have seen it so lately, you will have to travel far into space before you can see it as it then was in all its glory; for many years have passed since all its beauties disappeared, to leave in their place a sun-burnt desert and a treacherous lake.

After resting a-while in a shady spot, our two

friends once more mounted their noble steeds, and galloped down the gentle declines which were to bring them to the fertile plain. They appeared to have left their sad thoughts with the arid and desolate country through which they had passed, and their whole being seemed now to have undergone a total change. Even Caius Sartorius, half-forgot his lost love and her unhappy lot, when he found himself galloping upon a green meadow that so reminded him of his native Italy, and inhaling the refreshing breeze from the lake, which seemed to possess a peculiar power of effacing all sad and mournful thoughts from the mind.

Half an hour later our travellers entered Tiberias, where they intended for the present to take up their abode.

This town, the largest in Galilee, was built by Herod Antipas, over the ruins of the ancient Cinnareth, from which the name of the lake was derived—Gennesareth—and was called by him Tiberias, after the Emperor. It was a large town and a handsome one, for the king had spared no expense in its construction, and its numerous inhabitants were mostly brought thither by him, and were employed as fishermen on the lake. The celebrated warm baths of Emmaus, which lay in its immediate vicinity, were a great attraction, and made it a favourite residence for invalids, who flocked there in great numbers from all the country round.

To give accommodation to the numerous visitors, a few inns had been started during the latter years, and it was in one of these that our friends at last found repose after their ninety miles' ride from Jerusalem.

IV.

> "Nous tromper dans nos entreprises,
> C 'est à quoi nous sommes sujets ;
> Le matin je fais des projets,
> Et le long du jour des bêtises."
>
> VOLTAIRE.

AFTER a good night's rest, such as our travellers had not enjoyed since their departure from the capital, they were again on the move towards the Castle of Magdala, which was situated on the eastern shores of the lake, and where they intended to visit the celebrated Mary, who had recently taken up her abode within the ancient walls.

Her history and antecedents were well known in Tiberias, where her peculiar mode of life, and the rather questionable society she frequented, were objects of daily talk. Our friends, therefore, gathered plenty of information concerning her on their way to her castle.

"She is a prostitute, a sinner," said some.

"She is a saint," said others ; while there were not a few who maintained that she was "possessed by seven demons."

In a word, she was a mystery which none could solve, being a woman of an indepen-

dent spirit and much in advance of the age; not that any one could with truth say a word against her character, for her general conduct, though very free and certainly most unconventional, had nothing in it of criminal or even of questionable; with regard to its morality, all that could be said against her was, that she broke through all the established customs of the Jewish nation, and was therefore not received at the synagogue of the village, which was completely under the iron rule of the hypocritical Pharisees, who were strict observers of the law, and had added to it many traditions of their own, with which they made a great show of outward religion.

Mary's conduct was undisguised, and never for one moment did she try to hide the natural dislike she felt for these consummate hypocrites, who pretended to be too good for her, while they suffered the deadly sins of pride and uncharitableness to reign unchecked in their hearts. And this, perhaps, was the great objection they had against her; however, the truth was, that she was not at all understood in the country, and no one dared to visit her, and no Jewish woman of any standing would have cared to be seen in her company.

The excuse of all this, if not the real cause, was her uncle the leper, who inhabited the same house with her, thus setting the ancient law at defiance; for, according to the law of Moses, no leper should

hold communication of any kind with other persons. To this Mary, (or the Magdalene as she was generally called, since she lived at Magdala,) answered, that leprosy was not contagious, and that poor Simon was her Uncle, thus breaking through all the established customs, and creating many enemies, at least outward ones, for inwardly no one could condemn the young girl's charitable unselfishness, however they might choose to criticise it.

With these thoughts in their minds, and conversing upon them, the two young men took their way along the shores of the lake to pay their respects to the object of all these contradictory reports.

Martinian was as gay as ever, and the exhilarating breeze from the lake seemed even to increase his spirits, he talked and he laughed all the way, telling his friend the most amusing anecdotes, to which Sartorius hardly gave ear, for he was still in love and very unhappy, and his thoughts were far away from the beautiful scene around them.

And a beautiful scene indeed it was. The lake lay peacefully at their feet, reflecting the surrounding mountains upon its singularly clear waters. These arose beyond it in every direction, but especially towards the north, where Mount Hermon, still covered with snow, was visible amongst the transparent clouds which veiled the horizon. The greatest quietness and deepest silence prevailed, and only now and then

the distant song of a fisherman from his boat, borne to them by the breeze, or the unmusical noise of the wild ducks and pelicans on the banks, came to disturb this solemn silence which perhaps at this day is the chief beauty of the lake of Tiberias.

A few miles beyond Dalmanutha they came at last in sight of the village of Magdalà, with its old castle, built on a small mount, which projected into the lake, surrounded by orchards in full bloom, and luxuriant beds of wild flowers which seemed to grow almost on the very shore.

It was in this garden that our two friends were received by their beautiful hostess, and a scene more calculated to charm any one's fancy was never imagined by human mind bent upon captivating. All around was pink, mauve, and lilac, all was soft and delicate, from the mass of peach and orange, and apple blossoms, which covered the numerous trees—whose branches extended to the very border of the lake, where their soft tints were lost in the still softer hue of the azure waters—to the pure air which seemed floating with particles of gold and silver dust, sparkling like innumerable stars against the pale blue sky.

Mary quickly made her appearance, and served to complete the enchanting scene of which she might well have passed for the fairy queen. One would have compared her to Calypso receiving Telemachus in her enchanted isle, only that

the Greek goddess was sad and lonely, whereas Mary was so bright and radiant that the very atmosphere around her seemed brighter for her presence.

Martinian had often seen her before, but he was obliged to confess to himself that not even his most brilliant and exaggerated recollections of her came up to the beauty and the grace of the reality. His chief desire in coming to Magdala had been to distract the mind of his friend from the all-consuming sorrow which engrossed his thoughts, a result which he considered the fascinating society of the beautiful Magdalene was well calculated to effect, but now that he saw her again before him, handsomer even than he had ever seen her in his dreams, his first impulse was one of uneasiness and discomfort at having brought Sartorius to the enchanted shores where his beautiful goddess held her court.

V.

"In the spring a young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of love."

TENNYSON.

BUT the Mary whom I now present to you, my dear Walter, was not the same Mary whose acquaintance you made while in her father's house in the quiet village of Bethany.

Two years had elapsed since those long wearisome days I have described, spent in the paternal house in eternal household occupations, and long solitary rambles through the wilderness. Two years had passed, during which the neglected young girl of Bethany had developed into the most admired and most fascinating woman of Galilee, whose fame was already extended far and wide, and whose name had become suddenly known throughout the Roman provinces on that side of the Mediterranean.

And yet, to me she was still the same good, kind, ever bright, and faithful Mary of yore.

Those were happy days! We were the sole mistresses of the whole place, and our will was law for all around us. I cannot, perhaps, assert that our conduct was as perfectly free from criti-

cism as Martha, for instance, would have wished, but on the whole, and if our age and peculiar position were taken into consideration, I think we might easily have behaved much worse. We were so young, so inexperienced, and so ignorant of all the proprieties of life, that no wonder our independent conduct shocked the strict and long-faced Pharisees of the synagogue.

But Mary's will was law, and she laughed at them, and often went so far as to say that one smile from her would bring them to her feet if she chose it should be thus. "There is not one of those proud old fools who would not fall on his knees before me if I were to ask him to my house one night, however much they may say against me in public. I know them but too well, the vile hypocrites!"

In a general way, however, we troubled ourselves but little about the world's opinion, we laughed and we feasted, we danced and sang, and made ourselves as merry as we could, little caring what society had to say about us, and still less how Martha and Lazarus, who were still living in the old place near Jerusalem, might condemn our general behaviour.

We were rich, for Mary's portion of her father's fortune amounted to a great deal; and I must also say, that Lazarus had proved himself most generous towards his younger sister, allotting to her, not only the whole of the Galilean property,

but also all the jewels and plate belonging to his mother's family.

"We shall never want these things," he said. "The vanities of this world were not made for us, so you may have them; they will be useful to you perhaps, though I sincerely pray to God they may not."

The two years had passed in this way more like two months in our lives. Simon, Mary's poor uncle, lived with us, although I but seldom saw him; not that I feared his dreadful malady, but that my friend liked to nurse him herself, an unselfish care, which he repaid with all the devotion of his true and loving heart.

Raphael often visited us. At first he had insisted upon marrying the lady of his love, but Mary could not make up her mind to part with her liberty; and as time passed her love for him grew less and less vehement, so much so that at last all that the poor man could obtain from her was the permission to continue visiting us, and to pass a few hours now and then under the same roof with the object of his adoration.

Mary had now plenty of opportunities of displaying her great wealth and her artistic and refined taste. She no longer wore the coarse dresses with which she had been condemned to clothe herself, and conceal her beauty at her father's house, but she dressed in magnificent satins and adorned herself with costly jewels. She no

longer went to the well for water, or did any of the household duties which Martha had been so rigid in exacting; but had plenty of slaves and servants who were day and night at her orders, ready to obey her in everything, and they obeyed her with love and reverence.

During the two years which we thus passed in the Castle of Magdala, I might say that I was supremely happy, for I had everything I could desire, and my vanity and ambition were indulged to their full extent. We had constant visitors, mostly young Jews from Jerusalem, and Romans from Cæsarea and the other seaports, who flocked daily to our castle, in which they always found a good reception and hospitable cheer, which they generously repaid with rich presents. These Mary at first steadily refused to accept; but after a time, and at my request, she consented to receive some, when delicately offered as souvenirs, and when she was convinced that they did not deprive the giver of any material comforts.

When Martinian and his friend Caius-Sartorius came to visit us, we were almost alone, which was a strange occurrence Raphael of course was there, but he counted for little, for he kept almost entirely to himself, now that he could not pass the whole day at Mary's feet.

And yet Mary was not a coquette, she was straightforward and honest in everything, perhaps too much so; for her innocent indiscretions,

which were but the impulses of her passionate and easily excitable heart, might too often have passed for proofs of guilt to any one who was not entirely familiar with her vehement and spontaneous nature.

My first impression of Caius Sartorius, whom we now saw for the first time, was one of repulsion and instinctive aversion, which of course I could not then explain to myself, being ignorant of our past, and of all the horrors that had attended its course.

And here it will be a good opportunity to explain to you, my dear Walter, the reason of those strange sympathies and antipathies we sometimes feel for people whom we have never met before, at least in this life, and which have until now baffled the learning and the experience of all the philosophers who have ever tried to explain them. Knowing, as we can only know, our present existence, we are naturally ignorant of all that has happened to our spirit in its former incarnations. We are ignorant of our past, but we cannot help sometimes experiencing dim recollections of things which have happened somewhere else, and in some remote period; for, as Tennyson so beautifully expresses it,—

> "Memory dealing but with time,
> And he with matter, should she climb
> Beyond her own material prime?

Moreover, something is or seems,
That touches me with mystic gleams,
Like glimpses of forgotten dreams—
Of something felt, like something here,
Of something done, I know not where;
Such as no language may declare."

We have all had these extraordinary sensations, these flashes of remembrance, at some period of our lives. I remember that, during my last short earthly existence, I often and often experienced them, and in vain did I try to explain them to myself. When I met a person for the first time I was sure, from the very first, either to like or dislike them, the first impression was enough, I could rely upon it, and yet I did not know why. It was you, my Walter, who first gave me a possible clue to these extraordinary sensations. Your vision at Aberfeldy* alone could explain them, and much as I then doubted its reality, I could not but confess that it was the only possible explanation of these, which I may call mysterious warnings of our hearts.

The love or the hatred of one existence must necessarily influence us in a second one; we can forget actions which belong to the body, but the feelings which belong solely to the spirit, remain, and form indeed parts of our being and of our individuality.

Even in the spirit-world the sympathies or antipathies of this world are felt; a good action

* Described in "the Honeymoon."

is never forgotten, a bad one never goes unpunished. We can often contrive to escape the world's justice, but we can never hide ourselves from the spiritual retribution which awaits us on the other side.

In our previous life, Walter, we had hated each other, we had been mortal enemies, do you think we could meet again without feeling something in our hearts that made us repulsive to each other? Hatred is as much a part of our inner being as love. No wonder then, that when we again saw each other on this earth, although it was under such different circumstances, we should feel a nameless antipathy, that *we* could not explain, but whose origin might be traced to the days of Channa and Ananda, for if our bodies were now different, our spirits were still the same, and our natures had not yet had the necessary time to progress, and to become advanced enough to forget past hatred and become strange to all revengeful and unholy feelings.

But I must go back to the history of that particular existence and forget our previous individualities, losing sight for the moment of Channa, in the young Roman centurion Caius Sartorius, and of Ananda in the Jewish maiden Miriam.

The young Roman was still too much occupied with his own bitter thoughts to take much notice of the new objects and faces around him, which must have opened such a new world to his observation,

totally unknown to him before. As for his friend Martinian, although he had brought him to us with the sole desire of amusing him and dispersing his sad recollections of Mariamne, he was now only too glad to see him still lost in deep meditations, and taking but little notice of their fair hostess; in truth he almost encouraged his sad thoughts, and often spoke to him of that beautiful Jewess whose name he had been so careful never to mention when still in Jerusalem, or during their journey to Magdala.

For the previous six days he had done nothing but praise the charms and talents of Mary, always desiring that his friend should fall in love with her, but now that he had again seen her radiant in beauty and fascinating as no other woman, his policy suddenly changed, he no longer praised her to Martinian, he did not even speak of her for . . . . he had fallen in love with her himself.

Mary also felt that an unaccountable attraction, which she in vain tried to resist, linked her to the handsome soldier. All her other lovers were forgotten, even Raphael faded away before this new idol who was at the same time an enigma; she could read in his heart as in an open book, and there she saw stamped signs that spoke of love, but of a love which was new to her, of a love which she could not understand.

"What do you think of our new friends?" she asked one night when the two officers had left us

after a long day spent upon the tranquil waters of the lake close by. "What do you think of our new friends, Miriam?"

"That you should have nothing to do with them. I can say nothing against the one, but the other I hate. I could not tell you why, do not ask me to explain myself; but he is quite antipathetic to me, and a weight as if of iron seems to fall from off my heart when he goes away."

Mary looked confused. "And which of the two do you thus hate . . . the tall dark one . . . Martinian?" she asked in a trembling voice.

"Martinian! Oh no, the other. Martinian I do not dislike by any means; and I could almost like him if he were not the friend of the other."

Mary breathed more freely, it was evident that Martinian was the one she cared about, and that Caius Sartorius was indifferent to her.

"Shall I tell you a secret, Miriam?" Her face was radiant with joy as she said those words. "Come here close by me, girl," she added, beckoning me towards her. I went and sat down on a foot-stool close beside the couch on which she was reclining, still clad in the long yellow garment embroidered with gold which she had worn during the day.

After a short silence she began, bursting every now and then into a most musical laugh which did not however interrupt the course of her narrative.

"Well, my dear, you must know that that

Caius Sartorius whom you dislike so much is very unhappy in his love; such at least is what I can gather from his friend's incoherent statements, that he was over head and ears in love with a charming young girl at Jerusalem, who has jilted him and has married a rich old Jew, a certain Benjamin Isaac, who I believe by the bye was a friend of my father's. Martinian, who is so kind—is he not delightful Miriam?" she asked, interrupting herself, but without waiting for an answer. "Ah he is a very superior man, he is . . . Well, they are great friends as you know, and seeing how sad and dull poor Sartorius was in Jerusalem, where his unfaithful lady-love still dwells, he had the happy idea of bringing him to us, where, as Martinian says, any one would forget all the miseries of life. Now, my pretty Miriam, I want you to overcome your aversion for this poor young fellow, and amuse him during his visit here, I want you to vindicate the honour of our race which that worldly-minded girl at Jerusalem has so disgraced, by showing him that we Jewish maidens are as good as any other women, and as faithful. You would not like him, Miriam, to go back to Rome with such a bad impression of us? Now do this for my sake, you know how I love you." And she took both my hands in hers, and kissed me on the forehead.

"Impossible . . . impossible," quoth I, "I tell you I dislike him of all things; I tell you that I

would rather die than make love to that man, but I'll do it to the other, I am sure that would answer the same purpose."

Mary jumped down from the tridinia, and drew herself up to her full height.

"Thank you," she exclaimed, "I am very much obliged to you, but I can do that for myself."

There was something so ludicrous in this sudden burst of passion that I involuntarily began to laugh.

"What is there to laugh at, you imprudent creature?" she continued, noticing my ironical smile.

"Ah, poor Raphael! poor Raphael!" I exclaimed, still laughing.

Mary's passion seemed now to have subsided, for she threw herself again on the tridinia, and laid her fair face against its velvet cushion.

"If you are going to amuse the one, Mary, why not amuse the other at the same time?"

"He would appreciate your favours, I am sure, much more than mine. What do you think he would say to me, an ugly little woman like I am? If you want him to be amused, amuse him yourself. I am sure, Mary, you are quite able to undertake both."

"But do you not see, you stupid little thing, that Martinian would not like that?"

"Martinian, ah! and most likely neither will

Raphael like you to amuse Martinian; that is not a reason, though, why you should not do it. Besides, why did he bring him here at all?"

"I can tell you, Miriam, he is very sorry he has brought him now."

"Indeed!" I exclaimed, once more bursting into a laugh. Mary then changed the conversation, and soon afterwards we each retired to our chambers for the night, but what I had heard was enough to convince me that a great change had come over my friend's spirit, and that our mode of life would speedily change.

It was impossible now to doubt that she was in love, and a woman who is really and earnestly in love cannot go on being a coquette. . . . Poor Raphael had been forced to put up with hundreds of rivals who alike laid claim to the love of his Mary, but would he be able to put up with this irresistible and all-powerful rival, who stood as far removed from him as from all the rest?

I do not know that, even if she had never known Martinian, she would have loved this poor fellow well enough, despite his ardent devotion and handsome countenance, to have made him her sole master—to have married him in fact. She did not actually love him, but she pitied him, and perhaps, in the course of time, she might have fancied herself in love with him, for in nine cases out of ten, I am sorry to say, pity or admiration is mistaken for love, and acts its part,

how feebly, and how insufficiently, you can readily imagine! But she had seen the young Roman, and had felt the real emotions of the passion, that inexplicable vertigo, which once felt, nothing can in the future take its place. There are women who, having known but one man, are firmly led to believe that that particular one is the type of all the rest; but Mary, whose whole life had been one complete philosophical disdain of the conventionalities respected by sober, decorous, and respectable Jews, and who knew the heart to its very core, because she had handled a great many, could not be mistaken as to the real nature of the love she now felt for Martinian, and knew from the very first, in her heart of hearts, that his image would never be replaced in it by one equally dear.

Poor Raphael!

VI.

> "She was his life,
> The ocean to the river of his thoughts,
> Which terminated all."
>
> BYRON.

It had been a warm, oppressive day, and the shades of evening were falling fast over the picturesque landscape, reviving it with the fresh night breeze which, instead of chilling the blood with inclement breath, soothed it to rest with a warm delicious lull.

There was to be a great feast that evening in the old castle, and we were hourly expecting the arrival of the numerous guests who were to come from all the villages round, and especially from Tiberias, where it was now the season of the mineral baths.

Mary, with the habitual promptitude which was her characteristic, and almost peculiar to her alone in that relaxing climate, was already prepared for the feast, and was at the time walking impatiently up and down the terrace in front of the castle, anxiously awaiting Martinian and his friend, who were to arrive by the road which led by the shores of the lake from Tiberias, where they were stopping at the time.

She was magnificently attired in a rich silken gown in the Jewish style, trimmed with gold fringes, and short enough to display her beautiful feet, enclosed in tiny sandals of gold and crimson. On her brow rested a superb tiara of precious stones, and behind it hung, in long loose curls, her beautiful golden tresses, which floated around her snowy shoulders in the evening breeze.

She appeared very impatient, and her rapid movements betrayed her agitation; her blue eyes, which seemed to make the very sky blush with envy, were fixed on the turn of the road, where it bent down behind the village to follow the peculiar curve of the margin of the lake.

Suddenly she was stopped in her walk by Raphael, who had but that moment arrived at the castle.

Her face brightened when she saw him, and a ray of hope seemed to thrill through his heart, for his large dark eyes lighted up as they had not done recently; but this sparkle lasted but one second, it was but a flash which could not last, for his heart sank once more when the beautiful lady of his love simply said for all kind greeting,

"Can you see them, Raphael? Are they far behind you?"

He sighed, and then taking her hands in his, said, "Is it possible, Mary, that you can care more for a stranger who, but yesterday, was unknown to you, than for me who was the first

to love you, and who have been faithful to you for more than three years?"

She looked displeased, and an unmistakable gesture of impatience showed itself on her noble brow.

"And what right have you, Raphael, to question my actions, nay, the very heart-spring of my actions?"

"Ah, Mary!" he said, in a feeling but hoarse voice, "it is true that I have no right, no actual right, however morally I might pretend to influence your actions if not your feelings; but is it possible that you can prefer a stranger to such an old friend?"

"It is, and I can give you no more reason. In this world, Raphael, the oldest friends must expect to be supplanted by new ones; you need not accuse me of inconstancy, for it is not my fault that I did not make Martinian's acquaintance before yours,"

"You love him!" exclaimed the poor man, in a voice which betrayed the deepest emotion. "You love him!"

"No, because I thought I loved you once, and yet what I now feel I have never felt before. . . . What is love, Raphael? what is love?"

"Love . . . . love is life. It is that most powerful attraction towards one of the opposite sex that we cannot conceive until we feel it. It is all that we can fear or hope beyond ourselves; it

is that mysterious bond which makes of two beings one. It is a passion all dominant, all conquering; a great leveller which can bring down to its own line of equality from the proudest heights, and remove the most stubborn impediments, and yet, love is the greatest sweetness of our existence, the active and stirring principle, the life itself of our being. Oh! love is holy! Mary, holy! for it comes from God, that passion which is so quick to sweep through the soul, to purify or to destroy it for evermore, is the holiest sentiment in life, for until we feel it we cannot be said to belong to any sex. Such is love, Mary, the great passion which makes of us men and women; and yet the passion, I fear, you will never experience, for you are but a gay, sparkling butterfly, fluttering from one flower to another, and yet despising them all alike. I would you could feel it, and yet I pray to Jehovah that you may never love . . . . but there is no fear. Love requires opposition and difficulty before it can burst into an all-devouring passion, its flame must be fed with dew and tears, for the more one endeavours to extinguish it the more it burns; the stream which, if left to itself, would flow gently down through the meadows of life unnoticed and uncared for; if stopped, will impatiently rage and swell into the overpowering torrent, whose course nought can hinder. Therefore, I tell you, Mary, that you will never love, that you will never be a

perfect woman, for your love will never meet with any obstacles, and its course will for ever flow midst flowers and gay scenes under the brightest of skies."

The beautiful Jewess had seated herself upon one of the marble benches which surrounded the terrace, whilst her ardent, but now neglected lover was delivering this long tirade, and there, with her eyes still fixed on the distant road, she hardly seemed to listen to his words, though, in truth, they went direct to her very heart.

When at last he stopped, she raised her head, and in a soft and sweet voice, murmured, "If that is love, Raphael. If that is love . . . . . *then I love!*"

The poor lover felt as if the world had suddenly come to an end, when he heard these dreadful words. He had not heeded the numerous devotees who daily flocked from all parts to worship at the shrine of the beautiful Magdalene, for he knew that they could have no hold upon her heart; but he had counted too much upon the volubility of her changeable character, and had forgotten that by reason of it she might be compared to a volcano, in which lay hidden a great subterraneous fire, which might burst forth at any moment and consume everything around it—or, rather, to a furnace in which many fires had been lighted, which had gradually prepared it with inflammable materials, in which

state a single spark was sufficient to consume everything there in a moment, where a hundred faggots had so quietly smouldered.

"You are," he said at last, when he could master his voice, "like the leaves of the tree: the smallest wind moves you."

"You were the first to move the leaves, then," she said.

"But, like the leaves, Mary, you will end by being swept down one day."

"Ah!"

"And like the leaves, Mary, you will die forgotten and despised even by those who loved and admired you most while you were still the green beautiful ornament of the mighty tree."

"Jehovah alone knows where the leaf finally dies."

"Men do not care, for other leaves take their place, and old ones die forgotten, and are trampled under foot."

But a great commotion was now heard in the court below, which announced the arrival of some guests; and Mary walked forward to receive them, leaving her poor lover on the now moonlit terrace lost in his unhappy meditations, and watching, as she had done before, the road by which his rival was to approach the castle.

VII.

> "What nothing earthly gives, or can destroy,
> The soul's calm sunshine and the heartfelt joy."
>
> POPE.

A FLOOD of glory rolls over the mountains, and their summits shine with fire. It is the last struggle of the expiring day, a last struggle with life, and as it were a war waged by the spirits of darkness against the celestial angels. The dark thunder-clouds roll heavily upon the golden sky; the sun, no longer the almighty, all-consuming monarch of day, but the pale subdued orb that has run its course, sets amid the deep-red clouds in the western horizon, gilding the mountains around it, which might well pass for its throne—a tottering throne, which will not last very long; for as the king of day sinks behind them, the throne of royal crimson also disappears, leaving o'er the hills a dun flush of orange, which gradually softens into the pale indistinct blue of the remote distance.

The struggle is now over, and the night comes on apace, calm and beautiful, while the sparkling stars of the Southern Hemisphere appear one after another, led by Venus the planet of love,

always the first to pierce the veil of darkness which in southern climates suddenly interposes betwixt you and heaven.

On a handsome marble terrace overlooking the Lake of Tiberias, and facing the mountains, behind which the sun has just disappeared, are grouped around a gorgeously-spread table a merry party of men and women, whose gay laugh and brilliant conversation are audible from the peaceful waters below, and find at last an echo in the distant mountains beyond.

The Hebrews had various meals during the course of the day; but the most important one was that of evening, which took place at sunset, and which might be considered an equivalent to our English dinner.

But these meals, as a rule, were rather scanty, at least, so it would have seemed to us, who being accustomed to live in a colder climate, require a more generous diet. This particular supper, however, might be taken for an exception, for it was indeed a gorgeous feast, and the table before us was covered with the richest and choicest viands which the country could procure, or the lake offer, and the delicious wines from the then fertile slopes of Mount Carmel circulated freely amongst the guests.

At the head of the board, upon a marble couch covered with velvet cushions, sat the beautiful mistress of the house, at once the handsomest and

the best dressed woman in the assembly, whilst on either side of her, and on the same couch, reclined her two lovers, Martinian and Raphael, the one magnificent in his steel breast-plate and patrician tunic, the other simply but tastefully attired in white and green. The rivals seemed to be reconciled that evening, although a few angry looks still escaped them, which being directed behind Mary's back, passed unnoticed by her. But her fair head, which was the admiration of the whole of Galilee, was turned oftener toward the Roman's handsome form, so that it would not have been difficult to discover in a moment which of the two she preferred and favoured.

The rest of the company was mixed, it is true, but all were young and bright; the men, for the most part belonged to the best Jewish families, although amongst them were a few Samaritans, and two or three Romans, but the women were more remarkable for their beauty than for their ancestral descent.

"Have you heard of the dreadful calamity which has befallen the Jews at Rome?" asked a guest who sat on the other side of Martinian. "Four thousand Jews banished by the Emperor, only the other day, from the capital!"

"That is a dull subject, Samuel," said Mary, making a sign with her jewelled hand, "and one which I will not have discussed at my table, let us change the theme; perhaps Martinian, *you* can

tell us the truth concerning our friend Decius Mundus, and the extraordinary adventures he is supposed to have had since he left Judea."

"If it will amuse you, I shall be only too delighted," said he, with that gallant air which was the envy of all the young Jews.

"It seems," he continued, after due encouragement given to him by the fair hostess, who smiled sweetly upon him—"It seems that shortly after young Decius, who, as you all know, was a centurion for many years under the last governor in Cæsarea, arrived at Rome, he fell desperately in love with Paulina, the handsome wife of Saturninus. Now it appears that this lady, although she had a most beautiful countenance, and was in the flower of her age, had ever led a life of the greatest modesty as became the dignity of her ancient and noble line of ancestors, whom, I believe, she dates from the innocent days of Remus and Romulus.

"Paulina was therefore of too great a dignity to be caught by presents, so that poor Decius, seeing no way to win the lady of his love, decided as the next best thing, to die for her, and with this intention, he determined to starve himself to death. But his cook, Ide, whose name should be worshipped as that of a goddess in future, as I have no doubt it will be, for there are goddesses who have sprung up from less, was very much grieved at her master's resolution to do away with himself, and as she was very skilful, she encouraged

him by long discourses, and made him hope that it would not be difficult after all to obtain an interview with the lady. So she encouraged him in this way, and got out of him as much money as she could. But she was a wonderful woman, as you will see. She found out that the fair Paulina was very much given to the worship of the Egyptian goddess Isis, so with this information she devised the following stratagem:

"She went to some of the priests of the goddess, and upon the strongest assurances of concealment, she convinced them by words, but chiefly by the offer of money (which is always a sure passport) of the passion of our friend, and persuaded them, after having given them fifty thousand drachmæ, to use all means possible to induce the lady to favour his suit. So as gold is all powerful at Rome, as elsewhere, these holy priests promised to do everything they possibly could in favour of Decius Mundus. Accordingly, the oldest of them went immediately to Paulina, and told her that he was sent by the god Anubis, who was in love with her, and enjoined her to visit him. The foolish one took the message very kindly, and thought herself greatly honoured by what she chose to call 'Anubis's condescension.' So she told her husband of the message sent her, and that she was to sup that very night with the god, at which he also felt greatly flattered, and readily agreed to her acceptance of the invitation, being

fully satisfied with her discretion and fidelity. So she went to the temple of Isis, and after she had supped there, and it was the hour of repose, the priests shut the doors of the temple, and left her inside. When all the lights were gone out, Mundus, who had been hidden there by the priests, came forward and induced her to believe him to be the god; and when he at last went away, which was only at the break of day, Paulina returned to her husband and told him how the god Anubis had appeared to her in the temple."

"What a delicious joke," exclaimed all the guests, when the young Roman had gone thus far.

"He must be a clever man, that Mundus, and has certainly greatly improved since he left us," Mary said, presenting her golden cup to the slave behind her couch, which he filled. "Here," she continued gaily, "let us drink to his health, my friends—to Decius Mundus, the cleverest of Romans!"

And fixing her eyes upon the centurion by her side, the beautiful Jewess took the cup to her lips and emptied the contents.

"But, fairest Magdalene," he interposed, "I have not yet done with Decius Mundus's story: the best of the joke is still untold."

"Go on! go on!" was shouted from all sides, so that when silence was once more restored, Martinian again took up the thread of his discourse, and continued as follows:

"This beautiful Paulina was so proud of her conquest that she not only told her husband of it, but she also declared amongst her friends how great a value she put upon this favour which so repaid her for all the devotion with which she had worshipped the goddess Isis, her especial patron and protectress. Now her friends, who were not so blindly devout as she was, partly disbelieved the story, when they reflected on its nature, and were partly amazed at it, having no reason to disbelieve it, when they considered the modesty and the dignity of the woman. But one fine afternoon, a short time afterwards, Decius Mundus met his fair Paulina, and said to her, 'Nay, Paulina, thou hast saved me two hundred thousand drachmæ that I offered thee, which sum thou mightest have added to thy family treasure; yet hast thou not failed to listen to my love. As for the reproaches thou hast laid upon Mundus, I set no value upon names; but I rejoice in the remembrance of thy condescension, while I took upon myself the name of Anubis.'"

Shouts of laughter here interrupted once more the speaker, and some time elapsed before he was able to proceed with his story, which at last he did in the following words:

"Now for the first time the truth dawned upon her of the whole matter, and she was shocked beyond measure when she thought of the manner in which she had been deceived, and rent her

garments, and told her husband of the wicked contrivance that had been put in practice, and prayed him not to neglect to assist her in revenging the insult. So he went to the Emperor, and discovered to him the whole truth, whereupon Tiberius inquired into the matter thoroughly, by examining the priests about it, and ordered them to be crucified, as well as Ide, who was the occasion of their perdition, and who had contrived the whole matter; and he finished by demolishing the temple of Isis, and giving orders that her statue should be thrown into the Tiber."

"And Decius? what became of him?" inquired Mary in a careless tone.

"Oh! as for him," quoth the centurion, "he got off unhurt; for as the Emperor truly remarked, the crime that he had committed was caused by the passion of love, and love should be all-powerful in this world, as it is in Olympus amongst the gods." *

The night had now fairly set in, so that when the guests arose from the table, and the lights in the supper-room were extinguished, the terrace remained in darkness.

Every one, however, retired to the other apartments, or descended to the garden, excepting

* The foregoing story is related by Josephus as having actually occurred about the beginning of the Christian era, and has been recorded by him on the valuable page on which he mentions the existence of Christ.

Mary and Martinian, who remained talking in the recess of one of the open windows which looked upon the lake.

"You see, beautiful Magdalene," said the gallant centurion, "that everything gives way to love; even Tiberius can find no heart to punish the crimes it occasions. Is it possible that you of all others should be still a stranger to it?—you who inspire it perhaps more than any other woman I know; you who . . . ."

He would have gone on, but suddenly looking up, he perceived to his astonishment that she had not heard his words, and that all her attention was fixed upon the lake. He followed the direction of her gaze, and saw, standing upon the shore, the figure of a man, who was in the act of stepping into a boat.

He appeared tall, and was arrayed in a long flowing robe of the purest white. There was no moon, and the night was dark, and yet he lighted the darkness, as if a strong and pure white light were thrown upon him from some invisible source; he moved, and the light moved with him; he was alone, and yet when he stepped into the boat, it seemed to glide swiftly along as if impelled by many oars, although he appeared to use no exertion, and scarcely touched them.

The boat continued to glide swiftly over the surface of the smooth waters, and still the strange pure light continued to illumine that solitary figure.

Presently he turned, and then his face became, for the first time, visible to the two watchers in the window. It was one of those countenances which, once seen, can never be forgotten, for it had something divine in its expressive beauty, and yet the features were those of a man, and unmistakably those of a Jew. Mary gazed at him in mute admiration, and did not remove her eyes from him until he finally disappeared in the distance behind the rocks. Then raising her arms, she slowly passed the back of each hand over her eyes, as if she had been blinded for the time by that strange light, or as one awaking out of sleep; and seizing Martinian's two hands in both of hers, and pressing them convulsively between her own, she asked, with a deep earnest voice,

"Who is that man?"

The Roman soldier looked at her, and smiled strangely at the eagerness of her tone; the intensity of her gaze still continued fixed upon him, until he answered in a low tone,

"Jesus Christ!"

VIII.

"Who can he be?"
SHAKSPEARE.

"JESUS CHRIST!" "Jesus Christ!" she repeated, in a low voice, as if she wished to imprint the name on her mind. "Jesus Christ! Who is He?"

The Roman soldier raised his shoulders, and answered, in a careless way, "You should ask of one of your Jews, not of me; they should know their Rabbis better than I, a foreigner, a Roman."

Mary spoke not another word, but taking Martinian by the hand, she led him into the adjoining apartment, in which the greater part of her guests were collected, and amongst them her uncle, Simon, the leper; for, strange to say, all these gay men and fast women were more lenient towards the poor old man than the respectable and strict Pharisees, and did not object to his company, for in their hearts they pitied him, and could not but commend their beautiful hostess for the great devotion she showed towards him. It is indeed a strange truth that in all countries and in all times, old age, inferiority, and poverty find more real assistance and sympathy amongst the dissolute and light-hearted children of the hour

than amongst the strict adherents to the respectabilities of life.

Mary went slowly up the room, and let herself drop rather than sit upon one of the couches which surrounded the central fountain, where the little gold-fish were swimming about amongst the curious flowers which seemed to grow out of its marble basin.

Some of the young men approached her, and a circle was soon formed around her.

"Who is Jesus, does anyone know him?" she said, looking around her.

"What Jesus!" some one asked. "Jesus is a common name amongst us, of which particular one do you speak, fairest of the daughters of Abraham!"

"I do not know," she answered, taking some of the flowers out of the fountain, and carelessly placing them amongst the golden tresses of her hair, she began narrating the strange vision she had seen, for vision she chose to call it, and the peculiar but extraordinary beauty of the man she had seen.

When at last she had finished, her uncle, who was sitting near her, said:

"I know that man, if it be lawful to call him a man at all, I have often seen him, he lives somewhere by the shores of the sea of Galilee, and I believe comes from Nazareth."

"It must be Jesus of Nazareth," broke in several of the young Jews.

"I am sure it is he," continued the old man, "for what other man could have impressed Mary as this one has done?"

"Is it possible," quoth the centurion, "that the fair Queen of Magdala should have been smitten by an old rabbi such as that?"

"Do not talk nonsense, Martinian," angrily exclaimed Mary, rebuking him with her eyes as much as with her words, "I feel interested in that man, I cannot help it."

"I think, Mary," said her uncle, "I think that you would sympathise with him, for he is an avowed enemy of the Pharisees, for whom I believe no one here has any love." As he said this, he cast his eyes around the group that had now gathered round Mary, and not one face told him that he had been mistaken.

"He calls himself the Son of God," said Raphael, who for a long time had remained silent, although he had never quitted the side of the lady of his love since she had entered the chamber, "I do believe he must be mad, or else he would not speak as he does after the fate of Juda the Gaulonite, and Theudas and Barkokeba, examples of what innovators must expect in this country, and whose fate I believe should have proved a warning to him before now. We have had so many would-be masters, so many self-made prophets lately, that I am afraid he won't meet with much success, whatever his doctrines may be.

There was that John, who lived in the desert and preached repentance, and what was the end of it? He was put to death by Herod, and his doctrines perished with him."

"Besides, who ever heard of anything good coming from Nazareth?"

Here Simon took up once more the conversation. "I know nothing about him," he said, "except that his doctrine is one of love and peace to all men, and that the miracles he produces are incontestable facts, which no one can deny. I am convinced that if he would, he could cure even me?"

"Your faith is great, uncle, and I, who go by first impressions, can almost say also, that I too believe in him."

"Oh, your testimony is not worth having, Magdalene," said one of the young men, "for if you love him to-day you are almost sure to hate him to-morrow, you are so changeable, as we all know to our misfortune!"

"I am sure you need not speak, Samuel, for you have had already more than your share of our beautiful hostess' good graces."

"Nay, nay, I will have no quarrelling; if you must disagree, seek another battle-ground than my apartment. Samuel, let us have your opinion, you were always a reasonable man. What do you think of this new prophet?"

"I think he is a very good man so far as he goes, but I suppose that is not very far, for if he

did, he would soon be stopped by some of your friends, the Pharisees, or the Sadducees. The simple fact that he is permitted to preach in public as he does, is positive proof to me that he is not dangerous, and therefore but a poor teacher who dares not expose those villanous dogs who at Galilee as at Jerusalem have taken the lead of our religion, and have turned our faith into a mere routine."

"You say well, Samuel, and I must say that I agree with the force of your reasonings. But this Jesus, this Christ, as they call him, don't you think he is something more than human? I have only seen him once, and that at a great distance, and yet, there is something in him different from other men, and then the miracles we are all witness to, surely no mere man could perform them. Would it be so impossible that he should be the Messiah Himself come at last upon the earth?"

"The Messiah!" exclaimed Raphael, . . . "Oh, no, impossible! Not even he himself has even hinted such a thing; the Messiah will indeed come, but in another way, at least it is to be hoped so, he will be a soldier, a ruler, a king, who will lead us to victory and to power, who will deliver Israel, and will expel the foreign tyrants who to-day rule over the chosen people of God." As he said this the young man's eyes flashed with an extraordinary fire, and his nostrils expanded as if he

already saw the blood of his more fortunate rival flowing under his feet.

"Rome," he went on, "should be abased, Israel must at last triumph, and then, woe to the proud city who would make the world her slave, and who expels our brothers from her walls. To-day she banishes four thousand Jews by the wickedness of four men, the day will come, and it is near at hand when we shall massacre all the Gentiles in Judea, and the people of God shall rule the earth. If Jesus of Nazareth does this, then I shall be the first to proclaim him King of the Jews, and the Messiah of Jehovah!"

The Romans who were in the room at the time did not seem to take offence at his rash words, and only laughed at them. Martinian, however, who knew the real cause that had prompted them, coloured suddenly, and mechanically grasped his sword, but he soon composed himself, and when Raphael had quite finished his insulting speech, he said calmly,

"You are complimentary, young sir; I should indeed like to see the Jews sovereigns of the world, what sublime rulers we should then have; fancy being ruled by them who cannot even rule themselves! It will be a sight worth seeing, and one for which I would gladly give the finest show at the great amphitheatre in Rome."

Caius-Sartorius and the rest of the Romans laughed at the joke, and the young Jews were

obliged to laugh also, although they did so whilst biting their lips.

Simon, who was a great friend of peace, made an effort to change the conversation that was gladly seized by the ladies of the party.

"How would you all like to hear this wonderful master?"

"Oh, very much, very much . . . . it would be delightful . . . . . let us make a party and go to hear him. Oh yes, yes," was shouted on all sides.

"What say you then to go to-morrow to Capernaum and hear him for ourselves?"

"Oh, that will be charming; let us all go; we will hear him speak, and perhaps he will do some miracles; how delightful to see them."

So it was decided that we were all to go on the morrow to hear him preach, and shortly afterwards the guests took their departure, and we were left alone.

Mary went then to her uncle, and taking his hand in hers,

"If *he could* cure you," she said, "if by a miracle *he* could cure you of this foul and horrible complaint that makes you odious to other men. Oh, uncle! surely God would make a miracle in your favour if He can make it at all. Do you think Jesus can cure you? What do you think?"

"My dearest Mary, you who have been the only one who has had pity for me and for my sufferings, you who have braved everything and

come here to nurse your poor uncle, you should hope, you should pray that it might be even as you say. Only the other day I heard this wonderful man say, 'If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works.' I have seen him work such miracles as men could not work. I believe in his works. And I am convinced that if he chooses, I can be cleansed.

"But all good comes from above, my child; no one can of himself do anything; let us pray to God, Mary, for out of prayer comes forth grace."

And the poor leper and the gorgeously attired and beautiful woman who so loved and pitied him, knelt down side by side upon the marble pavement, and raised their hearts to God in a devout and fervent prayer, that it would please Him to look upon their distress, and mercifully relieve it.

IX.

> "Can any mortal mixture of earth's mould
> Breathe such divine enchanting ravishment?
> Such something holy?"
>
> MILTON.

MOVED as Simon was, Mary was moved yet more deeply, for if you could have permanently fixed her in one of those exalted and holy moments of her life, in which her whole nature became, so to speak, transfigured and idealised—if you could have fixed her for ever in some of her moments of exquisite and unbounded devotion—of unselfish generosity—of almost divine exaltation—you would have had the perfect type of holy womanhood, the saint which she afterwards became, but only after long years of penance and untold-of sacrifices.

But the time had not yet come; she was still "the woman of the world," "the woman who was called a sinner;" and the name of Mary Magdalene had not yet been washed and sanctified by the tears of repentance.

It was more curiosity than any nobler desire that led us on the morrow by the long dusty road on the shores of the lake to Capernaum, where, according to Simon, Jesus was at the

time. We were a large party, composed (with the exception of the leper) entirely of young people —gay, laughing women, and worldly-minded men —a strange caravan, truly, to go in search of the Saviour of humanity! But so it was, and I am forced to confess that Jesus found his truest friends and his most devoted admirers amongst those classes of society which were most despised and calumniated by other men; but then it is also true that he did not come to save the just, but to call the sinners to repentance.

Ah! what a day that was, Walter, when the glorious words of God's best-beloved son first fell upon my ear—I, a miserable sinner, who could then hardly understand them, and whose importance I was so ill-suited to appreciate! And yet, unable as I was to comprehend them in all their beauty, they exercised a strange fascination over me, and soon acquired a strong hold upon my spirit—so much so, that after I had heard them, and after I had seen that divine man, through whose mouth they were uttered, I became another being; and I can almost date my redemption from that eventful hour.

When we arrived at Capernaum, we learnt that the Master, as he was there called, had gone up a mountain which was not far from thence, by the shores of the lake whose blue waters sparkled under the walls of the little town. Accordingly we ascended the hill, and were soon amongst the

immense multitude which had gathered there to hear Jesus teach.

And there he stood, not half-a-dozen yards from us, upon a rising ground which formed a sort of hillock. He stood in all the majesty of his indescribable beauty, clad in a long white tunic, with the blue sky for the background, against which he stood out in bold outline.

His eyes, which shone with a divine light, were bent upon the crowd which surrounded him, and a silence as of death reigned amongst them. At last he lifted his right hand, and in a soft but commanding voice he began that glorious sermon which will never be surpassed in beauty of conception or truth of sentiment:

"Blessed are the poor in spirit: for their's is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek: for they shall possess the land. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the clean in heart: for they shall see God. Blessed are the peace-makers: for they shall be called the children of God. Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice sake: for their's is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding

glad: because great is your reward in heaven: for so they persecuted the prophets that were before you.

"You are the salt of the earth: but if the salt lose its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is then good for nothing but to be cast out and to be trodden upon by men. You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but upon a candlestick, that it may give light to all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

"Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For amen, I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall not pass from the law till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven; but whosoever shall do and teach them the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say unto you, that except your righteousness shall exceed *the righteousness* of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

"You have heard that it was said to them of old, *Thou shalt not kill;* and whosoever shall kill

shall be guilty of the judgment: but I say to you, that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be guilty of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, 'Raca,' shall be guilty of the council: and whosoever shall say, 'Thou fool,' shall be guilty of hell fire. Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and first go to be reconciled to thy brother; and then come and offer thy gift. Agree with thine adversary quickly, whilst thou art in the way with him; lest perhaps the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Amen I say to thee, thou shalt not go out from thence till thou hast paid the last farthing.

"Ye have heard that it was said to them of old, *Thou shalt not commit adultery;* but I say unto you that whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart; and if thy right eye cause thee to offend, pluck it out, and cast it from thee, for it is better for thee that one of thy members should perish, than that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand cause thee to offend, cut it off, and cast *it* from thee, for it is better for thee that one of thy members should perish, than that thy whole body should go into hell. It hath also been said, *whosoever shall put*

away his wife let him give her a bill of divorcement; but I say unto you that whosoever shall put away his wife, excepting for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery; and whosoever shall marry her that is put away, committeth adultery.

"Again, you have heard that it hath been said to them of old, *Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths;* but I say unto you, swear not at all; neither by heaven, for it is God's throne, nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; neither by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great king. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou can'st not make one hair white nor black. But let your speech be yea, yea; nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.

"You have heard that it hath been said, an *eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth;* but I say unto you, not to resist evil; but if any man smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man go to law with thee, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also; and whosoever shall force thee to go a mile, go with him another two. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee, turn not away.

"You have heard that it hath been said, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy;* but I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them

that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you, that you may be the children of your Father who is in heaven, who maketh His sun to rise upon the good and the bad, and sendeth rain upon the just and the unjust. For if you love those that love you, what reward shall you have? do not even the publicans the same? And if you salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? Do not also the heathens the same? Be you therefore perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect.

"Take heed that you do not your justice before men, that you may be seen by them, otherwise you shall not have a reward from your Father who is in heaven. Therefore, when thou dost an alms-deed, sound not a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be honoured by men. Amen, I say to you they have their reward. But when thou dost alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth; that thine alms may be in secret, and thy Father, who seeth in secret, will repay thee.

"And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Amen, I say to you, they have their reward. But thou, when thou shalt pray, enter into thy chamber, and

when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret will reward thee. But when you pray, speak not much, as the heathen do, for they think that they are heard for their much speaking. Be not you therefore like them, for your Father knoweth what things you stand in need of before you ask Him. After this manner therefore pray you: Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors, and let us not fall into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen. For if you forgive men their offences, your heavenly Father will also forgive you your offences; but if you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive you your sins.

"And when you fast, be not as the hypocrites, sad, for they disfigure their faces, that to men they may appear fasting. Amen, I say to you they have received their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thy head, and wash thy face, that thou appear not fasting to men, but to thy Father, who is in secret, and thy Father, who seeth in secret will reward thee.

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth, where the rust and the moth consume, and where thieves dig through and steal, but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither

the rust nor the moth doth consume, and where thieves do not dig through nor steal. For where thy treasure is, there is thy heart also. The light of the body is thy eye. If thy eye be single, thy whole body will be lightsome. But if thy eye be evil, thy whole body shall be darksome. If, therefore, the light that is in thee be darkness, how great will the darkness itself be?

"No man can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. Therefore I say to you, Be not solicitous for your life what you shall eat, nor for your body what you shall put on. Is not the life more than the food, and the body more than the raiment? Behold the fowls of the air, for they sow not, neither do they reap or gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not you of much more value than they? And which of you, by thinking, can add to his stature one cubit? And for raiment, why are you solicitous? Consider the lilies of the field how they grow: they labour not, neither do they spin, and yet I say to you that not even Solomon, in all his glory, was arrayed as one of these. Now, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven; how much more you, O ye of little faith?

"Be not solicitous, therefore, saying what shall we eat or what shall we drink, or wherewith shall

we be clothed? For after all these things do the heathens seek. For your Father knoweth that you have need of all these things, seek ye, therefore, first the kingdom of God and His justice, and all these things shall be added unto you. Be not, therefore, solicitous for to-morrow, for the morrow will be solicitous for itself. Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof.

"Judge not that you may not be judged. For with what judgment you have judged you shall be judged, and with what measure you have measured, it shall be measured to you again; and why seest thou a mote in thy brother's eye and seest not a beam in thy own eye? Or how sayest thou to thy brother: Let me cast the mote out of thy eye; and behold a beam is in thy own eye? Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thy own eye, and then shalt thou see to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.

"Give not that which is holy to dogs; neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turning upon you, tear you.

"Ask and it shall be given you; seek and ye shall find; knock and it shall be opened to you, for everyone that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Or what man is there among you of whom, if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a

serpent? If you, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to them that ask him? All things, therefore, whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do you also to them, for this is the law and the prophets.

"Enter ye in at the narrow gate, for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction; and many there are who enter by it. How narrow is the gate, and straight is the way which leadeth to life, and few there are who find it!

"Beware of false prophets who come to you in the clothing of sheep, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. By their fruit you shall know them. Do men gather grapes off thorns, or figs off thistles? Even so, every good tree yieldeth good fruit, and the bad tree yieldeth bad fruit. A good tree cannot yield bad fruit; neither can a bad tree yield good fruit. Every tree that yieldeth not good fruit shall be cut down, and shall be cast into the fire. Wherefore, by their fruits you shall know them.

"Not everyone that saith to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father, who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven. Many will say to me in that day: Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy

name, and in Thy name cast out devils, and done many wonderful works in Thy name? And then I will profess unto them: I never knew you; depart from me you that work iniquity. Therefore, whosoever heareth these my words, and doeth them, shall be likened to a wise man who built his house upon a rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and they beat upon that house, and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock; and everyone that heareth these my words, and doeth them not, shall be like the foolish man who built his house upon the sand, and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and they beat upon that house, and it fell; and great was the fall thereof."

When the Master had ended this wondrous sermon, silence reigned for a long time, for the people were in mute admiration of his doctrines, and even the gayest of our party were moved and subdued by his words. As for Mary, she seemed spell-bound; she said nothing; she never once took her eyes off this glorious being who had been the first to speak to her heart; she felt that her life was there, that he alone could now influence it, that she no longer belonged to herself.

Simon stood at the foot of the mount, trembling with emotion; and when Jesus passed by him, he threw himself at his feet, falling on his face, and in a voice intermingled with sobs, he

exclaimed—"Lord, Lord! if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean!"

And Jesus, stretching forth his hand, touched him, saying, "I will: be thou clean."

And, lo! his leprosy was cleansed; and Simon arose and went away, singing the praises of Jesus Christ, whose glory had been manifested to him that day.

X.

> "How pure at heart and sound in head,
> With what divine affections bold,
> Should be the man whose thought would hold
> An hour's communion with the dead."
>
> TENNYSON.

Walter. "Is it possible, my Conchita, that you have seen our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ, with your own eyes; that you actually heard him pronounce that divine sermon you have just repeated to me, and which I could never hear too often? Is it possible—oh! wife of my heart!—that one thousand eight hundred years ago you lived upon this earth and saw and heard him who to-day is worshipped as God by at least a third part of the population of the world?"

Conchita. "It is even so. If I lived in Galilee, as you say, one thousand eight hundred years ago, just at the time when Jesus was preaching the new revelation to mankind, it is only natural that I should have seen and heard him, and having once seen his glorious person, and having once heard his divine words, what more natural than that I should be converted and live?—what more natural than that from that moment he should become mixed up in my spirit's

history, and that his sublime doctrines, and his gracious promises should have exercised from that moment such a strange and vivifying influence upon my character?

"And you too, my Walter, though now unconscious of it, were there, and heard this very sermon, and saw him perform those mighty miracles which testified to the world the divine nature of his mission."

Walter. "If I could but remember! Ah, my Conchita! what is the present compared with the past!"

Conchita. "You are right; the present is but a moment, a moment of no value when compared with the centuries that make up the past. But the present will some day too become the past, and the day will come when it will have a charm for us, which in vain we try to discover in it now."

Walter. "You have spoken of the sudden cure of Simon the leper. Forgive me if I ask you how could that have been? The miracles of the Gospels have ever been stumbling-blocks to my faith? How could leprosy be cleansed by the mere touch of a hand? Surely this is unnatural, contrary to all the laws of nature, and therefore impossible."

Conchita. "Your very words show your ignorance of those laws of which you speak. It is true that to touch a leper would then have been considered fatal to a man, but to Christ it was

different; and he, by touching him, brings to him healing and salvation. A little knowledge makes men sceptics, but a great deal of knowledge will serve to strengthen their faith and make them wise to salvation.

"If you knew more of the laws of that nature which you suppose to know so well, you would know that the immediate cure of this leper was an act performed by the all-powerful will of Jesus upon the magnetic fluids, which it thus concentrated in an instant, and brought to bear upon the illness in all their force.

"Human magnetism can operate cures which you can hardly yet comprehend; but the nearer we arrive to that spiritual existence which is our goal, the more power we shall be able to exercise upon the magnetic and electric fluids, and the more wonderful will be the cures we shall be able to operate through them. You cannot understand yet, my dear Walter, all that man can do —or, rather, all that he will some day be able to do—with magnetism."

"The sudden cure of Simon the leper was therefore a natural occurrence—natural, because, however wonderful, it was yet within the bounds of the possible. It was natural to Jesus, and yet miraculous to us, for no *man* could have done it, at least no man such as those who still inhabit the earth. It was not supernatural, although we may call it superhuman. Jesus, in the spiritual nature

of his *apparently* earthly frame, possessed power over a variety of fluids with which he could operate the most extraordinary cures. On this particular occasion, these fluids penetrated the skin of the leper as soon as the connection was established between the two, and destroyed in an instant the cause of illness, restoring the vital currents to their natural and healthy state—for it was their perversion that constituted that dreadful malady. These pestilential causes destroyed, and expelled out of the organism, the blood was purified, and the external tissue of the skin was instantaneously cleansed. Thus Simon was cured, and the glory of God made manifest to man.

"These '*miracles*,' as I suppose I must yet call them, for want of a better name, came to corroborate his teachings. He taught and he acted as one having authority, and yet men did not believe in his divine mission, despised his glorious doctrines, and found fault with his most charitable acts!"

Walter. "You have explained to me the nature of this wonderful cure, but what I cannot yet understand is why Simon should have been a leper at all. Was it simply that the glory of God might be manifested in him, as in the case of the man born blind, which to me seems a very unjust, not to say improbable, reason?"

Conchita. "The Jews entertained a vague notion that these horrible illnesses which were to

them such a perfect type of sin, were punishments for sins committed before. They were right in their hypothesis. All such maladies are but punishments for previous sins, but generally not for sins committed in this existence, but for those committed in a previous one. Indeed, this is the only way that we can account for such diseases which are sometimes born with the child, and accompany him through life. Even the apostles believed this, when we hear them ask of their divine Master, 'Did this man sin, that he was *born* blind?'"

"Simon had always been distinguished for his good heart, and for his charitable deeds; he had been considered by most men as a truer and more upright man than even his brother Eleazar, and yet, suddenly his skin had begun to exhibit signs of corruption, a white eruption showed itself all over his body, and he was declared to be a leper, and was, according to the Jewish law, 'banished from the society of men.' This was a great mystery to all his friends and relations, who only knew of his present existence, and were totally ignorant of the past, but if they had known that past, the whole mystery would have been explained. They would have known how in his previous existence he had betrayed and almost murdered his best friend, and that the curses of all who then knew him had accompanied him to the grave. Had they known all this, they would no longer have wondered at his misfortunes,

which otherwise seemed so ill-merited and so unjust.

"But I must leave you now; I have exceeded my time to-night, and I hear the voices of my companions calling me from above. There is your bed untouched; lie down, Walter, and take repose, remember that you are still in a mortal body, and that you possess a frame which requires rest. Do not let these nightly interviews of ours interfere with your ordinary life and its daily wants. Our worlds lie far apart, so should our lives, though in spirit we are still so near each other, and may be said to be united.

"*Adios Amor mio!* I will watch over you in your sleep as you used to watch over me while I was in your world, for I am still your wife. . . . *Adios! . . Adios! . . . Adios!*"

NIGHT THE SEVENTH.

"The stain that on thy virtue lies,
Washed by thy tears, may yet decay;
As clouds that sully morning skies,
May all be wept in showers away."

F. Moore.

I.

> "Thus are the mystic lyres
> Attuned by hands above,
> That waft from heaven's celestial choirs
> The songs of angels' love."

THAT night I had an extraordinary dream that seemed almost like a vision.

When the beloved form of my angel wife had vanished from my anxious sight into the golden sky of the approaching morn, I had quietly laid myself down, dressed as I was, upon my hitherto untouched bed.

I kept my eyes open, although they were strangers to aught around them, whilst my spirit still followed the strange train of thought which had run through my head for the last six days.

Could it be possible! I could not but wonder, in spite of all, that I should have lived so many times before upon this very earth, and yet that I should have no recollections, however vague, of these existences? Could it be possible that I should have seen our Lord Jesus face to face, and yet entertain no remembrance whatever of him, that I should have heard him preach, and yet have forgotten the very tone of his divine voice?

As my imagination brought before my mind

reflections of this kind, my abstraction became deeper. I seemed to forget all, and I felt pains all over me such as I had felt the night of that other wonderful vision I once had by the Birks of Aberfeldy.* This night I dreamt, or rather, for it was indeed more like a trance than anything else, I saw, yet more extraordinary things. I saw blood and murder, crimes of every description, men and women, in the lowest state of existence, deprived of all that makes life happy in this world, ignorant of the very laws of good and evil, a chaos such as not even Dante could have imagined for his Inferno, and in the midst of this, there suddenly appeared a white-robed figure that spread light all around it, and that seemed to bring gladness and joy even to this infernal pit.

But I soon woke up again from this strange dream, and as the sun was now high upon the heavens, I got up from my bed, and after arranging my disordered toilette, I sallied forth into the shaded streets of the joyous Havana.

The day soon reached its end, although I must confess those few hours of daylight seemed to me more like centuries. That day, for the first time after the night of the ball on board the "Numania," I saw Lilian Leigh, and was obliged to pay my respects to her, with how little pleasure you can easily conceive, for she had now

* Described in "The Honeymoon," a philosophical Romance.

become more than ever indifferent to me since I had conversed with my spirit love.

But everything comes to an end in this poor earth of ours, and that long day soon disappeared with the rest that had gone before it into the western sky, leaving its place to the long sighed-for night, which came suddenly upon me, and with it the beloved form of my angel wife, who gradually descended from that bright star which showed the first over the towers of the beautiful capital of Cuba, and finally rested by my side upon the hanging balcony over-looking the peaceful bay.

After the usual greetings, she leant upon the balustrade, and, half hidden amongst the tropical plants which I imagined were still visible through her ethereal form, she thus continued the narrative where she had left off on the previous night.

II.

"The recollection of my former condition would permit me to make only a bad use of the present. Happy is it for me that I do forget." LESSING.

"YOUR great objection, my dear Walter, to the glorious doctrine of re-incarnation seems to be the forgetfulness in which we live of our previous existences, but do you not see, dearest, that it is to this very forgetfulness that we owe our progress? The temporary forgetfulness of our past should be considered simply as one of the infinite mercies for which we should daily thank our divine Creator. Experience is but too often only obtained by wearisome proofs and terrible expiations, the remembrance of which would be most painful, and could not but embitter the trials of our present existence. If the sufferings of this life appear long to us, what would they not be if to their length were added those of a hundred other lives? You, for example, Walter, are to-day an intelligent, and, I might almost say, a developed spirit, which fact you owe to the frequent and numerous trials, experiences, and punishments which you have been obliged to suffer for crimes, which to-day would be only repugnant to your now com-

paratively purified nature, but would you like to be constantly reminded that in your last existence you were hung for such crimes? Would not the shame of such an untimely, and yet but too well deserved end, follow you through your present life, and embitter your happiest moments, if you were constantly reminded of it? But as you do not entertain the slightest recollection of such a past, and as the world is as ignorant of it as you are yourself, you are to every one a new man, and before God, who knows all, a regenerated spirit.

Free from the useless remembrance of a dreadful past, you can act with entire freedom; your old debts are paid, it is now for you not to fall into new ones. How many men there are who would wish even in this life to throw a veil over the first years of their lives, and hide, even from themselves, the disgraceful memory of their first efforts! How many men exclaim, when their last hour approaches, 'If I could but begin again, I would do my task better.' Opportunity is all they require. It would be unjust of God not to let them have that opportunity of repairing the ills they have done, and of profiting by the experience they have acquired, they are therefore allowed to return to life, bringing with them their good intentions and the strong desire to do better, not with the recollection of their former failures, but with a clean fresh page whereon to inscribe the continuation of their spirit's history!

If we still remembered those trials and chastisements through which our spirit has been obliged to pass before attaining its present state of advancement, we should feel at every moment of our lives, the events of those former existences constantly coming between us and everything we did, as obstinately as when we look through the window from a lighted room, the objects we turn our backs upon, are still before us instead of the bright scenes outside.

If a man condemned to death were to form the firm resolution of becoming honest, what would be the consequences if he were allowed to escape this sentence? Every one would fight shy of him, he would be expelled from good society, and his only means of prolonging his existence would be to take once more to vice, and he perhaps would become even worse than before. But let us suppose, on the contrary, that every one ignores his antecedents, he would then be well received and employed by all, and how much more would such be the case if he himself could forget his past? for then he would be free of all fears, and could go about his work with all the energy and goodwill of a clear conscience.

Let us suppose, moreover, what happens almost every day in this world of yours, that in your very family is born a spirit who, in a former existence, has ruined you, or dishonoured your family and your name, and that this poor spirit,

full of repentance, comes to live amongst you, and by your very side, in order to repair the evil he has done you, by his affection and devotion; would you not both feel in a most awkward position if you were constantly reminded of your former enmities? Instead of forgetting your bitter feelings and wicked passions, you would only achieve their renewal, you would be constantly remembering them, and war and evil feelings would alone reign in the world, instead of peace and goodwill.

And it is to this very law that so wisely throws a veil over the past, that we owe the love which to-day unites us. For if our past was to have been remembered for ever, Miriam and Sartorius would have hated each other as bitterly, nay, even more so than Ananda and Channa. While, thanks to this law, or rather to the all just God who established it, the Roman soldier and the Jewish maiden ignored the bitter animosity which had constantly existed between them while in their former state of existence. Even as it was, a strong feeling of antipathy had sprung up between us in spite of our perfect ignorance of the past; but this feeling, being unfounded as we both naturally thought, we did all we could to smother it and to become friends.

Somehow or other, for a reason which then appeared to me inexplicable, but which is now as clear to me as the daylight, we were con-

stantly thrown together. Mary passed the most of her time between her Uncle and Martinian, so that Caius Sartorius, who always accompanied him, fell constantly to my lot, and as I knew that Mary wanted me to entertain him, I naturally tried to overcome my antipathy to him, and exerted myself to make the long hours we spent together as happy as possible.

An accident had also occurred recently, which had served to diminish, in a great measure, my natural repugnance and dislike towards him.

It had happened on the very morning of the day whose close had been made so happy by that joyous supper which I described to you at such length last evening.

I had gone out in a small boat by myself on the lake to visit some friends who lived just on the other side of the Jordan. It was a fine morning, the deep, blue sky was without a cloud, and an unbroken silence reigned over the landscape. But the lake of Tiberias is a treacherous lake, as now-a-days we all know, and it is precisely when most calm, and when its waters are the most clear and transparent that it is most to be dreaded. As I was joyfully gliding along over the crystal waters, enjoying the fresh breeze and the quietude and seclusion of the scene; a sudden squall came on, the treacherous wind from the mountains began to blow with sudden fury, the waves rose and fell with each severe gust, and

my poor little boat, unable to brave the storm, and tossed hither and thither, soon capsized altogether, and threw me head-long into the water, too frightened even to cry for assistance.

I lost all consciousness, and know not how long I might have remained in the water; but when at last I came back to my senses, I found myself on the shore resting upon a little plot of dry grass that grew by the side of the lake, while by my side, and bending over me, stood Caius Sartorius dripping wet, so that I could have no longer any doubt of how I came thither.

I could not guess what his thoughts were at that moment, but my first feeling was one of anger towards him rather than of gratitude. I felt as if I would rather have perished there and then than to have been rescued by him, the man I disliked above all others; but I tried to overcome this feeling that arose so spontaneously in my heart. It only lasted a minute, for the next I found words, however feeble and common-place, to express my thanks to him, and after a short time, we found ourselves walking arm in arm towards the Castle of Magdala, from whence Mary had seen the whole adventure, and was anxiously awaiting our return.

"Sartorius has saved your life, Miriam," were her first words. "He was passing near to the spot where your boat capsized, when seeing you in the water, he jumped in and saved your life at

the imminent risk of his own. You should be eternally grateful to him."

These words went straight to my heart. I too felt how much I owed him, and yet my spirit revolted against him, and hated him as much as ever.

Since that day, however, I put myself constantly out of my way to be amiable to him, and thus, little by little, I tried to forget my dislike, and grew more and more attached to the young Roman. But how little could I guess then that this was the man whose life I had plotted against in a former existence, and who, one thousand eight hundred years later, would be my beloved husband and devoted lover!

Thus you see, Walter, that we owe all our present happiness to this very forgetfulness of the past, which, in your present ignorance, makes you even doubt of the law which is the fundamental basis of all human progress and moral development.

III.

"Amor, Amor! todo esto es culpa tuya. Tu eres la causa de todo et mal."

About this time an unlooked-for event took place, which changed all at once our whole course of life.

Raphael, the poor young Jew, whose fate it had been to awaken in Mary's heart the first faint flame of love, which now reigned there so supreme, had grown more and more jealous of the handsome Roman centurion who had now so completely monopolised the affections of the fair enslaver. One afternoon, as Martinian was alighting from his horse at the gates of the castle, he met him, and in a hoarse voice and excited manner he thus apostrophised him:

"How regular is the Roman soldier in his visits to the Jewish maiden!"

Martinian mused a moment, and then answered slowly—

"Is that of any consequence to the Jew?"

"When he thus speaks, thou mayest be sure he has a reason."

"He should then keep it to himself."

Raphael now aroused, became bolder, and while

his bright black eyes flashed under his white turban, he thus went on—

"The mouth was made to give expression to the thoughts that lie heavy on the mind."

Martinian began now to guess the drift of these words, and, tying his horse to one of the posts by the door, he stood erect before the young man, as he thus spoke to him in a commanding tone of voice:—

"Enough of this, Sirrah. A Roman citizen and soldier commands thee to be silent."

"A Roman citizen!" burst out the Jew, and advancing two steps towards his rival, he spat on him, while he burst out into hysterical laughter. "A Roman citizen! I despise him."

Martinian could not of course, bear this insult, so he took hold of his short Roman sword, and at the same instant, Raphael, almost blinded with rage, brandished a large sharp-pointed knife in the air. For one second they stood still, one opposite the other, measuring their strength, with their long hair waving in the wind, and their nostrils widely inflated, as if they revelled in the prospect of blood.

Every man has in him a portion of the wild beast, which he is bound to exterminate, and for this must use his best endeavour to suppress and keep down. Probably it is a vague reminiscence of a former state of existence! Who can tell? Natural selection may be true in one sense, if not

precisely in the one put forth by Wallace and Darwin, for who can deny that we possess animal instincts and inclinations, which only civilization and religion can control, and which sometimes, in spite of all, are wont to come uppermost when everything is forgotten but the fierce passions we too often allow to rule in our hearts?

Sin is generally defined to be the violation of divine law; but I should rather take it to be a manifestation of the greenness of life, and the *ignorance* of law. The unripe peach is acrid, sour, bitter, acid, and hard; but let it hang upon the tree of life and receive sunshine, air, dew, and shower, and it becomes sweet and pleasant, and quite another thing. So it is with human lives,—they are in an imperfect state, in passing through which they give but imperfect fruits. It can hardly be expected otherwise.

As these two men stood thus face to face, one or the other, perhaps both, at the gates of death, they looked indeed more like two wild animals than two human beings, for all the good feelings, which go to make a rational being, were at that moment smothered, to give place to the brutal passion within them, that of jealous vengeance, and the thirst of blood.

A second later, their deadly weapons had met in mid-air, and the noise of the clashing steel resounded like distant claps of thunder through the vaulted halls of the Castle of Magdala. Hearing

the alarming noise, we all rushed into the hall, and the first sight that met our eyes was the desperate life-struggle of these two men on the ground.

There was a horrible interval of suspense; to stop them was now impossible, and in the heat of the fight they could not hear the piercing cries of Magdalena, who entreated them to stop. She stood, pale with horror, and trembling with fear, in the middle of the doorway, when the once loved frame of Raphael came rolling towards her, leaving behind it a stream of blood upon the sand, and pierced through with the Roman's short sword. She gave a wild desperate shriek as the ghastly corpse touched her, and fell on the ground overpowered with emotion in a fit of anguish and blinding tears.

Martinian, who fortunately was only slightly wounded, took her in his arms, and carried her to one of the inner apartments. We all expected that she would have shrunk from him after this, but on the contrary, she pressed him to her heart, and her first words were, "Thanks be given to Jehovah, for he has preserved thee to me."

But when after a time she was able to meditate on the event, she deeply lamented the poor young Jew's death, and accused herself repeatedly of being its sole cause.

"Ah, Miriam," she said to me repeatedly, as she hung half senseless on my neck, "I could not

help it . . . I could not help it. I loved Martinian too much to be able to hide it from that poor boy. . . . It is all my fault, and yet . . . I could not disguise my feelings!"

But the Roman's safety was now the first thing to be thought of. He could not, after this, remain in Galilee, where so many Jews had been witnesses of his violence, and would only too readily give evidence against him. Besides, the Pharisees would now be exasperated, and would not fail to inform the High Priest in Jerusalem of the crime committed against the son of one of their number. He must fly, and fly at once from Galilee. In Jerusalem he would be safe under the protection of the Romans, whose governor would readily give him assistance.

But not only was he not safe in Galilee, but even Mary would run imminent danger of being imprisoned, the murder having been committed in her house. The character she already bore was a glaring witness against her, and she knew but too well that the Pharisees would be very ready to seize this opportunity for getting rid of her. She too must fly. So it was decided that we should all quit the castle at once, and proceed as quickly as horses could carry us to the capital, to place ourselves under the protection of Pontius Pilate.

Thus it came about that one night, the next after Raphael's death, we quitted the peaceful

shores of the Sea of Galilee, never more to reside on them. The silence of the night protected our flight, which, for more security, we effected, not by the road which passed through Dalmanutha and Tiberias, but in a boat, which, under the cover of night, conveyed us in a few hours to Hippos, on the opposite shores of the lake—a town which, being in the tetrarchy of Philip, could offer us shelter for the day; and from Hippos we continued our journey through the country of the Gadarenes, keeping always on the eastern shores of the Jordan, which we only crossed near the mouth of the Salt or Dead Sea, as it is now called.

From hence we soon reached Jerusalem, where we took up our residence in Martinian's apartments in the Tower of Antonia—the only place, perhaps, in the whole city where we could be safe. And we had not been there an hour before we had to congratulate ourselves on our happy idea of quitting Magdala; for some of our slaves, who had come with the baggage by the direct road, and who had started after us, told us that the very morning after our flight some of the Rabbis and the Scribes had made their appearance in the castle, asking for Mary, but had been obliged to go as they had come—not, however, without showing signs of great anger and disappointment, when they had learnt that we had all left the place the night before.

The very afternoon of our arrival at Jerusalem, Martinian went to Pilate's palace to obtain his pardon and protection; besides the permission for Mary and me to inhabit the Roman fortress, at least for a short time, and until the whole occurrence had blown over, and been forgotten by the Jews.

Pilate, fortunately for us, was at that time at Jerusalem, it being soon after one of the great Jewish festivals, when the Governor repaired to the capital with his troops—where their presence was sometimes needed to preserve order, and for the due maintenance of Roman power and state. On this occasion he was accompanied by his wife, the handsome Claudia-Procula, who had been an heiress, and moreover was the daughter of one of Rome's mightiest houses.

"I come," said Martinian, when he had been shown into the presence of the Procurator and his consort, "I come, all-powerful general, to declare myself before thee, the author of a man's death."

"Was he a Roman citizen?" inquired Pilate, who cared little for the Jews.

"No, he was a Jew."

The Governor now inquired in a still more careless way, "Was it in an equal fight?"

"It was in an equal fight, and for a woman's sake."

"For a woman!" exclaimed the Roman ma-

tron, whose curiosity was now aroused. "Is she beautiful?"

"Ay, madam," answered Martinian; "she is the most splendid Jewess that eyes ever beheld."

"I should much like to see her!"

Pilate now rose, and said in a decisive tone, waving his hand as a sign for the centurion to retire:

"Let the Lady Claudia's wish be law; I will only forgive thee when I have seen the woman."

The next day Mary accompanied her lover to the Governor's palace; and he and his lady were so pleased with her, that they readily granted a free pardon to Martinian, and the permission he had asked, for Mary to inhabit the Tower of Antonia for the present.

So far this interview seemed to have been a great success, but poor Mary had to bear all through it the dishonouring, and to her, shameful appearance of passing for Martinian's mistress. Claudia had indeed been very gracious, but she had taken good care to let the Jewish maiden see clearly that she despised her altogether, as a creature not worthy to unloose the sandals off her feet.

When she narrated all this to me after her return home, I boldly told her that I did not think Martinian was acting honourably by her, for after what had passed, he should have

married her at once; but Mary was too much in love to see any imperfections in her lover's conduct.

Thus, sooner or later, Love makes fools of us all!

IV.

"Never marry but for love; but see that thou lovest what is lovely."—PENN.

CAIUS SARTORIUS had of course accompanied us in our flight from Magdala, and, as a Roman centurion, was now living with us in the tower of Antonia. With his return to Jerusalem the thought of Mariamne, which had never vanished from his mind, revived with fresh vehemence, and now that he was once more in that city where he had so loved, the power of association turned his wandering thoughts again and again towards the object of his affections.

He still loved her, though he felt an intense bitterness against her who, if really so much attached to him as he had been led to hope, could thus have placed between them a deep gulf that was now impassable. She loved him, and yet she had married another! Was not this a proof of her unfaithful and flighty nature—a nature incapable of conceiving any great passion beyond that of mere self-esteem, which leads to love of admiration, but never to real love? This bitterness was no doubt unjust. Men are always unreasonable in their passions, and resentment is

the first impulse of a man who, loving with the whole ardour of his soul, is rejected by the woman who has led him to suppose she was devoted to him with all her heart.

Martinian, who was now himself in love, and felt only too ready to excuse women in every way, argued with him often and often, on this point; and to Sartorius's almost daily cry of "how could a woman so good and pure as Mariamne marry such an old miser as Ben-Isaac," he constantly answered that "women always find a fascination in self-sacrifice." I know not how far this maxim would hold true, but it always seemed to have a good effect on the poor rejected lover, who still clung to the memory of her love with all the avidity of despair.

Love at last grew too strong for him, and he determined to risk everything to obtain once more a sight of her. He watched the house in which she now lived, and one day, when the old husband had gone to his money-lending stall in the temple, he managed to enter it, and found his Mariamne alone in one of the lower apartments.

Since her unfortunate marriage the poor woman had passed many and many a lonely hour, and often had she sighed for the handsome Roman, whom she still loved, in spite of all her efforts to banish his memory from her heart.

The fire of youth can never sympathize or be satisfied with the calm stolidity of age, and much

less with the calmness of such a premature old age as that of Ben-Isaac, for as I have before told you, he loved her not, having only married her for her money. No wonder, then, that the heart of this beautiful girl should have bounded with rapture at the sight of that beloved form. Sartorius clasped her once more to his heart with an ardour which she had not experienced since her marriage.

Their first interview was a long and a tender one. Sartorius urged her to fly from that house and accompany him to the Tower of Antonia, as he had done on the night of her marriage, but she again refused him, and now with still more reason, for she was the wife of another, and it would have been a sin to have left her husband. She well knew that to see him at all was a crime, or at least would have been so considered by the Jewish law, but she, like Mary, was too far gone in love to consider anything, and so, after many a fond embrace, she consented to appoint an hour on the morrow, when she knew her husband would be absent, to see him again, and thus he left her, thrilling with joy, for he knew that he was loved.

After this first interview they often saw each other, generally at night, when Ben-Isaac, who slept very soundly, could not even suspect their interviews, and thus their passion grew deeper and more intense.

One night, however, the old man woke up in the middle of the night, and missing the tender

form of his wife beside him, he got up and looked at his clepsydra or water-clock, which stood at the foot of the bed. It was only four in the morning, so he knew that Mariamne could not yet be up and dressed. He hurriedly left the apartment, and hunted everywhere for his missing wife, until he arrived at one of the remotest rooms in the house, one that had access from a back street, and there, to his horror and astonishment, he found Mariamne, and discovered her in the arms of Caius Sartorius.

The young Roman instinctively seized his sword and brandished it in the air, but Mariamne threw herself between her husband and her lover, and held the former in her arms until the latter had time to escape by the open window on the other side, and from thence gain the street.

All this passed before the old man's eyes like a dream, his horror was such that he could hardly move, and his tongue refused to utter a single word. Mariamne, however, had not lost her presence of mind, and throwing herself at his feet, she thus addressed him :—

"Thou art my husband, Benjamin Isaac, and I am thy unhappy wife, but I was vilely deceived when I married thee. However, I do not want to excuse my fault, I am culpable. I know well that I should have been faithful to thee since I am thy wedded wife; but love was too strong for me, my heart was far from thine, and has enticed me

from thy bed. . . . . I am criminal, oh Isaac! . . . I avow my crime, but I ask thy pardon."

The old Jew looked for one moment at the beautiful woman who knelt at his feet, as it seemed, overpowered with grief and shame, her long black locks hanging over her bare shoulders in graceful disorder, and her beautiful gazelle-like eyes veiled by tears; he looked at her for one moment, but no sooner had his eyes met her's than he withdrew his gaze as if with horror, for at that moment, and only then, he discovered how beautiful, how lovable was that woman who had been his wife for the last six months, and only now, when she was lost to him for ever, did his heart beat with love for her. But he well knew that it was too late; the same look that had revealed to him her charms had also told him but too plainly that she loved another, and that she had been unfaithful to him.

"Why hast thou conversed with that man?" he muttered at last, moved perhaps more even than she was.

"Because he loved me!"

"And didst thou love him too?"

"Ah me!" answered she, her voice now hoarse and choking, and the gushing tears streaming from her eyes. "I loved him long before I ever knew thee!"

"And you married me, woman! loving another . . . . why didst thou give me thy hand if thou couldst not give me thy heart?"

"I was obliged to obey my father, oh my husband!"

"Thou art criminal then."

"But I entreat thy forgiveness, can'st thou not forgive me . . . . does my misery find no pity in thy heart?"

"I cannot forgive thee," he muttered, after a short silence. "God and His law condemns thee to death; has it not been written that the adultress shall be put to death? Let thy blood therefore fall upon thee; I should break the law if I were to forgive thee and conceal thy sin, and should merit the punishment that is due to thee for thy crime."

Mariamne shuddered as she heard these words; she well knew that all chance of escape was now over for her, and that the law of Moses commanded that she should be stoned to death by the people, who, always jealous of the maintenance of their law, would have no compassion for her. And this was the reason that had made her confess her guilt so readily, fancying that if she confessed, all would have been forgiven to her. But Ben-Isaac could not forgive her; it would have been acting contrary to all the ideas in which he had been brought up, and besides, the fury of jealousy had been aroused in him with the first pang of love, and he felt that only death could vindicate his honour.

The sun was now high up over the hills, and

the ever-busy streets of the city were already crowded with people. Ben-Isaac seized his wife by the arm, and opening the back door to the street, he pushed her outside his house, exclaiming to the crowd of idlers who had gathered round the door at the unexpected sight, "I, Benjamin Isaac, the husband of Mariamne, daughter of Nepthali, this woman whom you see, declare her to be an adultress, I expel her from my house, and I sentence her to the death justly imposed upon her crime by our law. Let Jehovah be praised."

And he pushed the poor woman into the street where the multitude soon took possession of her, and hurried her away fainting, amidst cries and shouts of scorn, while others followed, picking up stones and throwing them at her as they went.

V.

> "Foul jealousy! thou turnest love divine
> To joyless dread, and mak'st the loving heart
> With hateful thoughts to languish and to pine,
> And feed itself with self-consuming smart;
> Of all the passions in the mind, thou vilest art."
>
> SPENSER.

MORE than a week had elapsed since we had taken up our residence in the Tower of Antonia, from whose fortifications we had not stirred one step, fearing always the anger of the Jews. But Martinian, who, after all, was the only one really concerned with Raphael's death, went in and out into the town as freely as if he had nothing whatever to fear. When I remarked about this, he answered carelessly that the Jews would not dare hurt him, while they would only too readily take possession of Mary, and put her in prison. This, he assured me, was the only reason why he objected to her quitting the fortress. This reason, however, did not satisfy me; I felt sure that there was another motive, and a far more powerful one, for his keeping us thus apart from all without, for in truth we were more his prisoners than his guests.

I communicated my suspicions to Mary, and

suggested that perhaps he was carrying on a love intrigue with some one else which he did not wish her even to suspect. This mere suggestion set Mary's thoughts wandering in that direction, and she began, from that day, to observe attentively all the words and movements of her lover, jealousy, the most fearful of all passions, soon took possession of her soul; she now felt sure that the Roman was unfaithful to her, and that his frequent visits to the city were occasioned by some new love affair in which he was engaged. The days now seemed longer to her than ever, and even the few hours which she spent by his side had become wearisome and almost unbearable, for her heart told her that his thoughts were all the time wandering to some other woman. Such grew to be her anxious jealousy, that one day she determined to follow him into the city, and thus, disguised as an old slave, she traced his steps all through the old town and the upper market-place to the very doors of Pilate's palace, through which he vanished.

Her passion gave her courage, and veiling her face well with her mantle, she entered behind him the massive portal of the governor's palace, crossed the *atrium*, and advanced through the empty *vestibulum*, until she reached a *peristylum* surrounded by fluted Ionian columns, which gave entrance to a large saloon, (or *tablinum* to speak classically,)

in which, to her horror, she saw her lover seated beside a woman upon a *triclinium*, in earnest conversation. She could doubt no longer, Martinian was unfaithful to her love. She would have given all her wealth, nay, all her charms, to have heard what passed between them, but she dared not approach nearer for fear of being seen, so she was obliged to content herself with watching them from a distance, hidden behind the curtains which hung across the door-way. But even from here she could see that the woman was young and handsome, and that her beautiful and delicately moulded features bespoke a Roman descent.

After an hour, which seemed to poor Mary to have lasted an eternity, Martinian kissing the jewelled hand of the lady, bowed and withdrew; almost touching, as he did so, the curtain behind which stood Mary Magdalene, the woman whom he was so vilely deceiving.

Martinian once gone, she too thought of flying from that hateful abode, but the sound of another person approaching from the interior checked her movements, and she was obliged to remain yet for a time, hidden in that door-way. The person who had now entered the chamber was no other than Claudia Porcula, the wife of the governor. And as the two women now stood closer to her hiding-place, Mary could hear every word they uttered.

"Olympia, dear," said the Roman matron as she entered the apartment, kissing the younger lady on the forehead, which was half hidden under a golden wig, touching in front the stibium or black antimony which surrounded her eyes. "Olympia, dear, I have just seen the centurion quit the palace, has he been long with thee to-day?"

"Yes, aunt of mine, he has been longer than usual, and he has actually proposed to wed me."

"I expected that," said Claudia, arranging the folds of her richly embroidered tunic, "you know that it was all a plan of mine his coming here at all."

"And would you advise me to accept him?"

"Of course, my dearest Olympia, he is of the best Roman blood, and as handsome as Apollo himself, besides, with my influence to help him on, he is sure to do well. I am all-powerful with Tiberius, and Rome will not disdain such a soldier at this time, when all officers are at a premium."

"But what about that woman, that beautiful Jewess of his, of whom you spoke to me the other day?"

"Oh, don't let that story worry thee, my child, he will soon get rid of her, and of all his other mistresses when once he is a married man; you would not deserve the title of a Roman matron if,

when married, you were not able to keep your husband all to yourself."

"But do you think he cares for her . . . do you think he loves her?"

"Why, child, you must be mad to be jealous of a woman of that description, who sells her beauty to the highest bidder."

And each encircling the other's waist with her snowy arm, the two women left the apartment.

Mary still stood between the rooms, the curtain hanging carefully before her; she stood motionless, and her cheeks were as white as those of the statues in the peristylum. A thunder-bolt seemed suddenly to have fallen before her, and to have torn the veil asunder which until then had blinded her, hiding from her the true position in which she had stood before the world. Was she indeed, as Claudia had said, but a common prostitute, who would bestow her beauty upon the first comer?

The mere thought seemed to turn her mad, and hurrying from the house, now not even taking the trouble to conceal her face, she turned her steps, overpowered with shame, towards the fortress, which was the home of her lover.

The whole of that day she watched his arrival with trembling hopes and fears, but he came not, the night came, with its shades and its artificial lights, but Martinian never made his appearance. At last, on the morrow, when the sun was only just beginning to gild the top of the temple be-

side the tower, he arrived, overpowered with fatigue and exhaustion, after a long and sleepless night.

Mary inquired not where he had been, her jealousy had now given place to another feeling, and her whole soul was in it. As he entered her closet, she stood erect before him, with her arms crossed upon her throbbing breast, and thus she apostrophised him:

"So you love me no longer? So you are going to marry another woman? . . . Nay, do not try to deceive me any more, for I know all. Yesterday you asked the fair Olympia for her hand, and to-morrow most likely you will be her husband. What do you intend to do with me?"

The centurion stood silent before her, as if he were hearing his sentence pronounced from those heavenly lips to which he had so often pressed his own. And yet there was not a sign of anger in her voice, but a tone of scorn which thrilled through his very soul.

"Ah me," she went on, seeing that he answered her not. "I suppose I but meet with my deserts, for after all I am but a miserable *prostitute*, not worthy to be mentioned in the same breath with the Lady Olympia, whose hand you solicit."

"Oh, let me explain," now burst forth Martinian, clasping the fair and tender form of Mary to his breast, "let me explain, Magdalena of my heart, I love thee above all, I adore thee, . . . thou art

my life, my very being, but circumstances, . . . necessities, . . . my future position, . . . society requires . . . Oh God . . . Oh God, she has fainted!" and he burst out into sobs, this stout soldier, over the drooping form of his beautiful mistress, which lay senseless upon his knees.

VI.

> "Go—go—be innocent, and live—
> The tongues of men may wound thee sore;
> But heaven in pity can forgive,
> And bids thee 'Go, and sin no more!'"
>
> T. Moore.

When she recovered from her fainting-fit, she found herself alone in her apartment, and in utter darkness, for the wooden shutters were closed. Her first movement, on coming to her senses, was to throw open the window; her heart was so oppressed by the different emotions she had experienced during the last twenty-four hours, that she could hardly breathe. As she opened the casement, which looked southwards over the Temple of Herod, close under the walls of the Tower of Antonia, she was startled by a sight which was entirely new to her. The spacious court below, known as that of the Gentiles, was, as usual at that early hour, crowded with the money-lenders and different traders who came there to sell things for the sacrifices; but a strange commotion reigned amongst them. A man, who was simply attired in a long white robe, stood in their midst. A great crowd of people had gathered round him. One look at that

man was enough for Mary, in spite of the distance, to recognise in him the very same whose appearance had had such an extraordinary effect upon her in Galilee. It was he . . . the prophet . . . the god . . . she knew not what . . . who had cured her uncle of his leprosy!

A strong desire to hear that melodious voice, to listen again to those consoling doctrines, once more took possession of her; and quitting the apartment, she quickly descended the stairs of the tower, and passed out into the open air, beyond the two walls; and from thence crossing the bridge, she entered the temple, and soon found herself amongst the hundreds of people who had gathered round the son of man.

She had not been there half-an-hour however, before a crowd of Scribes and Pharisees came suddenly into the very centre of the group, dragging with them a woman only half dressed, and whose appearance presented the deepest signs of misery, shame, and despair. When they had got quite close to Jesus, they shouted, placing her before him—

"Master, this woman was taken in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses in the law commanded us that such should be stoned: but what sayest thou?"

All those around him knew only too well that this was only a new snare of the Pharisees to entangle Jesus in his talk by obliging him to do

one of two things: either to pronounce a judgment against the woman, which would have been thought hard and cruel by a people who had grown very lax in regard to the sin charged against her, and would thus rob him of his character for mercy, and which judgment would also have set him in direct opposition to the Roman Government, which did not allow the power of death to the Jews; or the alternative of opposing the law of Moses, and seeming to make light of a great sin, which conduct would be used against him, to damage his character with the people.

Jesus, however, remained silent, writing with his finger on the sand which covered the ground, (for this took place in the inner or women's court, beyond Solomon's Porch). But as they persisted in asking him, he raised his head, and said in a calm tone—

"He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her."

The Pharisees and Scribes who had brought her thither, looked at each other in mute astonishment, and one after another, left the group. When Jesus was left alone with Mariamne—for this poor sinner was no other—and with the people who were there before, he said to her—

"Woman, where are those thine accusers? Hath no man condemned thee?"

Mariamne looked up now from the ground, for the first time, and her eyes met his. A

beatific vision seemed all at once to pass before her. She arose, trembling, and in a low voice she answered—

"No man, Lord."

Then Jesus said unto her—

"Neither do I condemn thee. Go, and sin no more."

VII.

"Remorse is the echo of a lost virtue."
LORD LYTTON.

"'Tis nothing virtue's temple to deface;
But build the ruins, there's a work of grace."
MIDDLETON.

A CRY of joy rose high on the morning air as these words left the mouth of the favourite master, —a cry which bespoke the gratification of the people. They all now stood up and left an open space for the poor sinner to quit the presence of her deliverer, who no sooner saw herself once more free, than, without even staying to thank the Lord, she fled from the temple as fast as her sore feet would carry her.

Mariamne, now finding herself delivered from her cruel enemies, and once more free in the crowded streets of Jerusalem, knew not which way to direct her solitary course. She could not go back to her husband's home. Should she seek shelter in her father's house in the upper town? For, although now fully conscious of her guilt, and of the urgent necessity of repentance, she could not but shudder when she thought of her jealous husband, who most likely would once

more expel her from his house, and give her up a second time to the fury of the people. While she was in this perplexity she heard a voice behind calling her by her name; she turned her head and recognised before her the martial form of Caius Sartorius, the cause of all her misery, who, having but a moment before heard what was happening to his love, was flying to deliver her from her enemies, or die with her by their hands. I need not say, therefore, how surprised he was to find her thus alone and still alive in the middle of the town. She however explained the whole event to him, and when she had finished she asked him where he thought she should go.

"Come to my lodgings, Mariamne," he exclaimed; "I will protect thee from all the world. Come to me, now you are free."

"Oh never, never!"

"But why? . . . thy father would only send thee back to Ben-Isaac, and he would but expel thee once more from home."

"The course thou proposest, however, Sartorius, would be one of sin, it would be making myself once more culpable, and worthy of the punishments I have already so well deserved. I am not thy wife, and I owe something to the divine master who has delivered me from my enemies, and saved me from a cruel death; let me at least remain worthy of his favour."

Sartorius found it in vain to plead with her any

longer, so at her urgent request he left her once more alone to continue her journey to the home she had so disgracefully dishonoured.

What had become of the poor husband all this time? Ben-Isaac remained still in his home overpowered, not so much by his dishonour as by the sudden love with which his miserable wife had inspired him at that last meeting—a meeting which he naturally thought would be the last they would have on earth. The slightest noise from the outside made his frame tremble. What were his millions to him now? worthless and useless when his happiness had flown never to return. Again and again did he repent his too hasty chastisement of his wife; again and again did he accuse himself of being the sole cause of her present infamy. If he had been a good and loving husband to her he thought, she would never have sought in another the love he had so carelessly denied her since her marriage to him.

His imagination pictured her to his mind before her enemies, in the midst of a countless multitude, who, with jeers and laughter, were, perhaps at that moment, overwhelming her with a rain of pelting stones. He saw her tender form covered with blood, and torn to pieces by the cruel hands of an idle, half-savage, unfeeling multitude.

Suddenly the door of his room opened, and with the flood of light which filled the apartment, there appeared the slender form of

Mariamne, with her garments torn and soiled, and her face half-concealed by her hanging locks.

Ben-Isaac sprang to his feet when he saw this form which he took to be a vision, and after a pause, fell on his knees before it, overpowered by his grief.

Mariamne also knelt down beside him, and with a trembling voice, asked his forgiveness. He then perceived that it was his living wife and not a spectre, and that the form he clasped to his heart was that of the wife he had so lately expelled, and he tried to recoil from that involuntary embrace, but it was too late, his heart had forgiven her, and his lips refused to remain silent any longer.

When he heard how it was that she had been able to escape from the fury of the people, and to return once more alive to her husband's house, he became more and more astonished. Who could this man be who could thus influence the multitude?

In the midst of this scene, a great noise was heard on the outside as if proceeding from a crowd of people, curses and blows resounded all through the house; it was the Pharisees and the Scribes who had returned in search of their victim, ill contented with Jesus's strange judgment, which for a moment had saved her from their fury.

Mariamne shuddered as she recognised the well-

known cry of her enemies, which proclaimed her dishonour and her shame. But Ben-Isaac opened the window of the room in which they were, and making a sign with his hand as if for silence, thus addressed the crowd.

"Faithful Jews and brave inhabitants of Jerusalem, sons of Abraham and Isaac, let it be known throughout the town, that I, Benjamin Isaac, freely pardon my wife of the crime I have this morning, perhaps wrongfully accused her, and once more take her to myself."

Shrill cries and groans now burst out from the disappointed multitude below, but Ben-Isaac shut them out by closing the window against them, and he and his wife remained in each other's arms alone in the room; and that night was the first that they spent together in happy confidence, for such is the peace that repentance wins from heaven.

VIII.

"There is a second self, deep hid beneath the self—not merely what we show to the world in common (that may be merely a mask), but the self that we ordinarily accept, even when in solitude, as our own; an inner, innermost self; oh, so different and so rarely coming forth from its hiding-place, asserting its right of sovereignty, and putting out the other self as the sun puts out a star!"

LORD LYTTON.

THAT wonderful and unexpected scene left Mary more and more moved.

The misery of the unhappy wife expelled from her husband's home, the unutterable anguish which that miserable and guilty creature must have felt when hurried along the streets of the city amongst a cruel crowd, who proclaimed her dishonour with piercing cries, whilst pelting her with the stones they found in passing; the horrible death to which she had been exposed in the very first half of her life; the maddening aspect of her delicate countenance, from which fear and suffering had almost banished every other expression but that of misery and burning shame, and then the sudden change of scene, her unexpected deliverance, the flight of her enemies, all these seemed to have passed before the Magdalene's eyes like the events of a dream.

Who could this man be who could thus work

such miracles? Who could this man be who could thus pardon the sinner?

"I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

These words, which fell upon her ear like the silvery notes of the judgment trumpet, thrilled through all her being, and went deep into her soul. Yes, she seemed to realise and feel that he was indeed the light of the world, that he alone could give life, and that those who followed him could never walk in darkness.

She was a sinner too, and at that moment she felt overpowered by the suddenly awakened sense of her sin, but he was all powerful and all merciful. He would forgive all; had he not himself said, "Those who come to me I will in no wise cast out?"

An inexplicable feeling took possession of her, those words seemed to throw a new light on her whole being; they enabled her to see herself as she had never done before. She had always been governed by vehement passions and sudden resolutions, and had often felt, though but imperfectly, the necessity of a religion; thus ever in extremes she passed at once from total indifference into vehement devotion, and yet she had no higher standard of right and wrong than that given her by the formal system under which she had been educated; but those words of Jesus seemed

all at once to have awakened another being within her, an inner, innermost self, of which, until then, she had lived unconscious.

She heard no more of Christ's beautiful words; that one statement had been sufficient for her, and had filled her whole being. Slowly, but with a sure and firm step, she left the women's court, and descended the marble steps into the court of the Gentiles. A stranger to all outside her own heart, she passed between the stall keepers and scribes, unconscious even of their presence, and passing under the gate of Huldah, she left the temple, and returned to the tower of Antonia.

In her apartment she found Martinian, who had been anxiously seeking for her everywhere. The Roman soldier had expected to see in Mary's face a stern look and an angry frown, after the scene which had taken place between them that morning, but he was surprised when he noticed that she was calmer and more beautiful than he had ever before beheld her, and that a celestial smile played on her lovely features.

"You see, Mary, that I am still faithful to your love. . . . Are you not glad to see me?" he exclaimed, as she entered the apartment.

Mary, whose thoughts were far away from him at that moment, answered carelessly, "Yes," but it was a *yes* that might easily have been translated into a *no*.

Martinian felt almost hurt at this inexplicable

indifference on the part of the woman he had been used to see so devoted to him. He sprang up from the couch on which he had been reclining when she had come in, and walked with great strides up and down the room, like the soul of Agamemnon across the meads of Asphodel.

Mary fixed her eyes upon him, and how different did he appear to her now from what she had been wont to think him! That tall, manly frame, the sight of which until then had always thrilled her soul with love, and had so fascinated her very being, now appeared coarse and material when she compared it with that other presence, which was so spiritual, and which seemed indeed to participate more of the divine than of human nature!

Martinian now saw plainly that Mary no longer loved him, and he could hardly believe his senses, after the extremes of tender passion which he had been accustomed to receive from her.

"Can it be possible, Mary?" he said, advancing towards her.

"What?"

The centurion stretched out his hand to put his arm around her, but she, at feeling that touch, trembled violently, and the blood mounted to her face, lighting it with a bright crimson glow, while she unconsciously retired a step backwards. Martinian turned as cold as a statue.

"What is this, Magdalena?" he asked, after a while. "Am I indeed so repugnant to you?"

"Repugnant . . . ! no, only I do not like to have a man's arm round my waist."

"Have you so soon forgotten the long hours you have spent in my arms?"

Mary's frame trembled once more, and she exclaimed in a choking voice, "Oh, stop!"

"And why *stop?*"

"Because that remembrance makes me suffer."

"Am I to understand, then, that it makes you suffer to be reminded that you have loved me?"

"Yes, because our love has been sinful."

"And you repent, then, of ever having loved me?"

"Oh yes, with all my soul!" Mary said these last words with so much fire and energy that Martinian now thought he had discovered the true motive of this seeming indifference. How mistaken he was! He imagined that the intense feeling with which Mary had exclaimed that she no longer loved him, was prompted by the resentment of the jealous woman who felt but too deeply that he loved another. This idea soon soothed the intense vanity of the Roman, who attributed all to the news of his approaching marriage with Olympia.

Mary, in the meantime, although still loving Martinian, felt more and more the necessity of renouncing this love, which to her could be but a

criminal one, and of firmly repenting of ever having indulged in it.

Martinian let almost a week pass away before he again presented himself in her apartment, believing that his absence would produce in Mary the effect which the privation of seeing the object of her love generally produces in woman. But he was very much mistaken, for Mary's new-found self was stronger even than her love, and in the course of those five long days she had not once thought of him.

Her imagination had not been idle however; and in those few days she had definitely made up her mind to throw herself at Jesus' feet, and ask his pardon for her sins. This determination had grown more and more intense in her; but when she had made enquiries after the Master's present abode, she had been greatly baffled by learning that soon after the Feast of Tabernacles he had left Jerusalem and returned to Galilee. Her newly-awakened faith was, however, equal to all emergencies, and she had lost no time in making up her mind to quit Jerusalem and fly to Jesus, wherever he might be found.

Thus it was in the midst of preparations for her hasty departure that Martinian found her, when, after five days of useless but premeditated waiting, he had at last determined to appear before her.

His surprise knew no bounds when he saw the

boxes and parcels spread about on the floor in every direction.

"What is the meaning of this, Magdalena?"

"Don't you see?" she answered him in a tranquil voice. "I am leaving Jerusalem this very afternoon. I have already trespassed too long on your hospitality, and I must now really quit you."

"You are jealous of me, Mary—I see it but too well—and unjustly so, by Jupiter! I swear to you that I do not love anyone but thee. My marriage with the lady Olympia is broken off. See, here is a written document that returns me my word given but too hastily in an unfortunate moment."

And he gave her a parchment, in which what he had said was indeed stated, and the document was signed by Olympia Procula. Mary glanced over it, and then returned it to him, simply saying:

"I am sorry you have done this, Martinian. I would have been only too happy to have left you under the care of a loving wife."

"But I love her not. I never loved Olympia. It was only ambition and vanity that prompted me to ask her hand. She is the niece of Claudia, and second cousin of the Emperor; and, as her husband, the very first posts in Rome were open to me. I never loved her!—I love but thee, my angel, my soul! Oh, forgive me if for one mo-

ment I appeared to have forgotten your love and indulged in a dream of foolish ambition!"

"Oh! stop, stop, Martinian! I do wish you had never thought of me again, and that the fair Roman might have conducted you to the very throne of Cæsar, if possible."

The centurion in his vehemence had fallen on his knee before Mary; but when he heard these words, he sulkily arose, and exclaimed in a fury:

"Only one interpretation can be given to those cruel words, Magdalena. Thou lovest another!"

Mary mused a moment, and then she answered in a low tone, but her voice was perfectly audible, though hoarser than usual, and her words were distinctly pronounced, although she paused between each, as if short of breath:

"Yes, I do . . . if you will have it so."

IX.

"The kindliest record ever given,
Even under God's own kindly hand,
Of what repentance wins from Heaven!"
T. Moore.

Martinian remained for more than a minute mute with astonishment. But the serpent of jealousy soon awoke him to the whole reality of the case. He had trusted too much to Mary's love, and in the happiness it had afforded him he had forgotten that he too might some day be forgotten, as she had forgotten all those she had loved before, when she had seen him. The image of Raphael, a victim to this very love, now rose before him, and this remembrance made him raise his head as if he had been a lion wounded in the fight, and with a hoarse voice he exclaimed,

"At last then you have forsaken me, as you have forsaken those who preceded me in the possession of thy heart. How much does thy new master give thee for thy love?"

Mary heard this insult without moving a single muscle of her countenance. On a former occasion such words from the mouth of the man she loved would have rendered her supremely unhappy; but

now she heard them as if they had been said by a child who did not understand the dreadful meaning they conveyed.

Martinian was, however, not only surprised by her statement, but by the easy, natural, and straightforward way in which she made it.

"And you dare to tell me that another passion has suddenly taken possession of that heart in which you have so often assured me that I alone could reign?"

"I was mistaken."

"You were mistaken?"

"Yes, because I know now that that love was criminal and sinful, before man and before God."

"You shall say that no longer," now exclaimed the poor man; "for if you will have me as your husband, here you see me at your feet. My hand is yours; take it."

For one moment Mary doubted what she should do. Should she take him at his word and become his wife? or should she still persist in her intention of flying to Jesus? She hesitated, but it was only for one second; for the thought was no sooner formed in her mind than it was banished.

"Martinian," she said, after this pause, which seemed like a century to her lover, "I can hide the truth no longer from you. I love you still, but I will try to outgrow this passion, which I know but too well to have been a criminal one, and I will forget you—if I can. Keep your hand,

noble Roman, for one more worthy of it than I am. You will never hear from me more, but impress well in your heart my last, my parting words: *in this world virtue is preferable to happiness.*"

Martinian looked up at her. His astonishment knew no bounds; for this was so different from all he had ever before known of her. He felt that a new and an infinitely higher passion had entered her heart, and that with one bound she had suddenly risen quite out of his reach. He felt overcome by the sense of his own wickedness and powerlessness before this woman, who but a few minutes before he had so vilely insulted, treating her as a prostitute who would sell her love to the first comer. As he fixed his eyes on her he saw that she had for ever changed for him, and he unconsciously knelt down beside this woman in whom the seeds of the saint were already giving fruit, and kissing her hand with all the reverence with which she now inspired him, he left the apartment, to ramble in solitude outside the walls, and think of his lost love, not only with pain and sorrow, but also with rejoicing, for he knew her now to be one of God's beloved ones.

From that moment began the regeneration of that noble spirit, and to-day, as our son Raphael Carlton, it will not be long before he gives ample proof to the world of his virtue and of his superior intelligence, which have since that memorable day

in the history of his soul, been ever developing and progressing through the ages.

That very night Mary Magdalene, accompanied only by one slave, left Jerusalem, and travelled day and night, hardly giving herself the necessary time for rest and food until she reached the deserted halls of her castle of Magdala.

Here the memory of her past life returned to her; the scenes of her gay, luxurious, and reprehensible life rushed back to her mind, and she felt that her sins were greater even than she had ever imagined. But, in spite of all, what were they, compared with those of the woman taken in adultery, whom Jesus had so freely pardoned?

The next morning she learnt from her servants that Jesus was to dine that very afternoon at Capernaum, at the house of one of the chief of the Pharisees who resided there, named Simon. For one moment again she doubted: should she present herself amongst her enemies, and thus acknowledge her guilt before all her neighbours, whom she had formerly so despised? Yes, she would. "My repentance shall be as public as my sins," she exclaimed; and putting on her best garments and covering her arms and neck with her richest jewels, she presented herself in the banqueting room of Simon the Pharisee, where Jesus and all the other guests reclined, as was the custom, upon long couches round the well-furnished table.

With firm step she advanced up the hall, and falling at the master's feet, she burst into a flood of tears which fell upon them, and wiped them away with her long golden tresses which hung loosely from her head, while she anointed them with a precious ointment which she had brought with her for this purpose.

When Simon and the other Pharisees present saw this, they murmured within themselves, saying, "This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him, for she is a sinner;" and they exchanged very sagacious looks and smiles to their private satisfaction, but Jesus seeing what passed through their minds, said to them—

"There was a certain creditor which had two debtors, the one owed him five hundred pence, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most?"

Simon answered and said, "I suppose that *he* to whom he forgave most."

Christ then said unto him—

"Thou hast rightly judged." Then, turning towards Mary, who still lay at his feet lost in a mystic trance, he continued, "Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet, but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss, but this woman,

since the time I came in, hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint, but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. Wherefore I say unto thee, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much; but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little."

Then lifting her up with both his hands, he said, "Daughter, thy sins are forgiven. Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace."

And the peace that passeth all understanding reigned in her heart from that moment.

X.

"If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him."—St Luke.

Mary retired from the Pharisee's house with a heart lighter than she had known it for a long time, for she felt that her sins had indeed been forgiven, even if the words had never been pronounced. Such was her faith that I believe she would have thought herself free from all evil after having kissed those blessed feet of the divine master.

Mary Magdalene may be considered to have been the first Christian, for she was the first to understand in its full meaning the nature of this faith which is love of Jesus. Unbounded, unlimited love of Jesus. A doctrine, however true, cannot properly be the object of either faith or love. We can only have faith in a person; we can only love a human creature, and this is the reason why Christ the Elohim, or guardian and guiding spirit of this earth, thought it necessary to clothe himself with a human body, or rather "to take upon himself the *likeness* of man," and to come for us upon the earth, living for us, dying for us, interceding for us with his Father and our

Father, that we might love him as a person, and cherish him as a personal Saviour.

Mary Magdalene had this deep personal love for Jesus, and in this she should be our example, our eternal pattern. But the new love which she now experienced, and which filled her whole being, to the exclusion of all lower passions, was more than a mere natural affection, such as she felt towards a companion, a friend, or a benefactor. It was far greater, and of a very different nature to any of the different passions which she had experienced in succession for her numerous admirers; these had consisted of a mere vain and selfish attraction rather than any higher feeling, an attraction of body rather than of soul. But this new love which she now felt was in its essence a divine love, a love full of faith, and devoid of all thought of self; a love such as we must all feel some day for that high seraphic Spirit who has watched over the gradual and wearisome development and progress of our spirits through the ages, and has at different stages helped us with his example, and his unbounded love, to carry the cross of the flesh, to which we are still bound, even as he chose to be, to give us courage and resignation, to teach us the lesson of self-sacrifice, and to show us the proper way to heaven.

That very day, Mary divided her more gorgeous garments amongst her domestics, and gave liberty to all her slaves. Her property and her jewels she

sold, and gave the produce to the poor, only retaining for herself a small sum of money which she calculated would take her to Bethany; for, like the prodigal son, she had resolved to return to her brother's house, and make up with abnegation, kindness, and sisterly love, for all that she had made that kind brother and sister suffer during the period of her rebellion.

And now, we see her once more leaving Jerusalem, but this time through the fountain gate, and directing her steps up the rugged road towards the home of her youth.

She first passed by the numerous gardens which rose above each other on the southern slopes of Mount Olivet. The road was then, as it is to this day, a broad and well defined mountain track, which winds over rocks and loose stones, with a steep decline below on the right, and the sloping Mount of Olives rising high on the left, with its many olive and fig trees, which grow out of the rocky soil above and below. There is a long ascent thence, from which a magnificent view of the city is obtained. Immediately below the path is the valley of the Kedron, here in its greatest depth as it joins the other valley known as that of Himmon. Jerusalem rises on the other side of the deep abyss, with its three walls and its many towers, presenting one of the finest panoramas that it is possible to witness.

Mary paused when she reached this turn of the

road, and looked over the rocky ledge back towards the city, as she had so often done, with longing eyes, in her youth. Jerusalem, the former goal of all her ambition, wherein she had so lately suffered her greatest degradation, seemed to call her back to its agitated bosom. She thought of me, and of Sartorius, of Martinian, the only man she had ever really loved, and of Olympia, her beautiful rival, who there dwelt amidst luxuries and pleasures of all kinds; for one moment she felt herself attracted towards that much beloved yet much hated city; but her better angel turned her thoughts once more towards the good track, and throwing herself on the ground, she,—as our Lord did a few years later, when he beheld the city from this very spot,—wept bitter tears over Jerusalem.

And to-day, who would not pause and look back upon the unhappy city, which appears so mournful in her desolation, when he passes this sacred spot, so full of sweet remembrances of our dear Lord Jesus Christ, and of the events of ancient history before him? For it was here likewise that David wept, when, fleeing from Absalom, and bearing the Ark of the Covenant, he went over the brook of Kidron towards the wilderness. And here also was he met by Hushai, whom he had sent to defeat Ahihtophel, and afterwards, a little higher up in the steep ascent of Mount Olivet, we are told

that he encountered Ziba, and Shimei who came forth from Bethany to curse the Lord's anointed, who, turning to his faithful servants, meekly answered, "Let him alone, and let him curse, for the Lord hath bid him; and who is he that shall dare say, why hath he done so?"

Thoughts such as these passed through Mary's mind as she knelt there with her eyes fixed upon Jerusalem; would her brother and her sister come forth from Bethany as Shimei had done, and curse her as he had cursed the great king, anointed by God as he had been? Such were her thoughts, but how much more joyful would they have been if she had known that it would be from this very spot that her beloved master would ascend into heaven to "his Father and her Father," to "his God and her God," and thus at last fulfil His divine mission of the redemption of humanity?

But time flew by, and she knew that the family at the village retired early to rest, so on she went once more on her journey up the steep cut in the lime-stone which testifies to this day of the immense antiquity of the path; and soon afterwards entered the village which she had so hated in days gone by, but which she was henceforward to love as a repentant sinner.

Lazarus and Martha knew not how to express their joy when they beheld their long lost sister coming back once more to their arms, and they

both thanked God from the bottom of their hearts that He had touched that sister's heart, and turned her from her sins to the higher enjoyment of a repentant and holy life ; for it is, indeed, out of anguish that cometh forth sweetness and joy, just as the beautiful spikenard must be crushed and bruised to give forth its pleasant perfume.

NIGHT THE EIGHTH.

"Our deeds still travel with us from afar,
And what we have been makes us what we are."

I.

> "'Tis one thing to be tempted, Escalus,
> Another thing to fall."
>
> *Measure for Measure.*

During the time of the events I narrated to you last night, my dearest husband, I had remained in Jerusalem, still inhabiting the Tower of Antonia, with Martinian (our little Raphael), and Caius Sartorius (thyself).

The latter was still as much in love with Mariamne as ever, but the poor woman had determinedly refused to see him ever since the day when her husband had taken her back to his house. But this firm decision on the part of the object of his affections only served to increase his passion, and make his desires the greater. So great, indeed, became the ardour of his love, that, hoping to satisfy his uncontrollable desires, he determined to put an end to the life of Ben-Isaac, of whom he had grown mortally jealous since his wife had shown such marked affection for him. Thus love made Sartorius a murderer; the loftiest of virtues made him commit the lowest and most horrible of crimes.

Our passions are all good while we retain the

mastery over them; but they are all to be feared the moment we become their slaves. Nature forbids us to give way to our passions; reason forbids us to wish for what we ought not to obtain. Conscience cannot prevent our being tempted, but it forbids us to sink under temptation. It does not depend on us to have or not to have certain passions, but it depends on us whether we restrain them or not. All the sentiments over which we rule are good; all those which rule us are criminal. Love only the beautiful and good, which can never die. Keep your conscience clear of evil. Let your duties be always before your inclinations. Do unto others as you would be done by. Learn not to mourn for things that must perish. Learn to forget all, when virtue requires it of you.

Such is the law of right and wrong—the law, however, which only experience can teach—for it requires many and many an earth-life before we are fully made aware of its immense importance, and of the dreadful consequences which befal those who transgress it.

In that long ago forgotten life you were but an inexperienced, ignorant, undeveloped spirit; no wonder, then, that you thus let yourself be ruled by the unrestrained passions which then agitated your breast. You loved Mariamne, and you wished to obtain the full enjoyment of your love, even at the cost of committing a crime; and so you determined to murder Ben-Isaac, believing

that, the husband once dead, the wife would have no objection to become yours.

There was at the time in Jerusalem a celebrated robber, by name Barabbas, who had been for some time in Rome, where you had employed him more than once in work with which you had not cared to meddle personally. You sought out this man, and arranged with him that he should free you from your rival at the first opportunity. This, of course, soon presented itself. One day, as the old man, unconscious of the plot against his life, was walking through a desolate field near the city walls, he was suddenly seized and stabbed to the heart by the sure hand of Barabbas. The affair, however, proved to be a most unfortunate one; for some of the soldiers of the Roman garrison stationed upon the outer walls, heard the cries of poor Ben-Isaac, and ran to his assistance. They arrived too late, the murder having been already committed; but they managed to secure the murderer, and to lodge him safely in one of the deepest dungeons of the fortress.

Barabbas was a well-known villain, and had several times before been committed to prison; so no one doubted but that this new crime of his was done to rob the old man of whatever money he might have upon him—this motive being only the more probable, because he had not long left the Temple, where he transacted the greater part of his business, and had a considerable amount

of gold in his large leather purse. But Caius Sartorius trembled when he heard of this most unlucky termination to his long-dreamt-of vengeance, for he knew but too well that Barabbas would hardly fail to confess who had prompted him to commit this crime, when the trial should take place. He knew that he possessed no security whatever that this man would keep silent; on the contrary, he felt almost certain that he would try to involve him in the guilt he could not possibly deny, and thus implicate him in the crime and involve him in the punishment.

From that day he lost his peace of mind and all the happiness of life, for he felt that his existence was day and night hanging upon a mere thread, which might at any moment, be broken. He tried all he could to prolong the trial, which was easy for him to do, the Romans being rather lax in the exercise of their justice, and the Jews being, for the present, deprived of the power of life and death, even upon criminals of their own nation; but he was always in danger of being suspected of some complicity in the affair which he tried so hard should be passed by unnoticed. Thus Sartorius lived in perpetual fear, for he dared not say a word even when he knew that his very life depended upon it. Neither had his crime been of any avail to him, for when he went to visit the youthful widow after she had received

the news of Ben-Isaac's death, she burst into tears, and openly accused him of the deed.

"If thou thinkest to become my husband by such foul means, thou are very much mistaken; I have sinned once, but that once will serve to teach me never to sin again in the same way. Ben-Isaac's memory is sacred to me. I will remain faithful to him in death, for the very reason that I so shamefully wronged him when in life. Whatever love I might have had for thee has now been turned into hatred; I will never be thine, and would rather perish than become thy wife. But for the sake of the love I once bore thee, I entreat thee to fly from Jerusalem, or I will denounce thee before all the town as the murderer of my husband."

That very day she left her husband's home, in which she had known nought but misery, and returned to her father's house, where she considered herself safe from her lover's persecution. The vow she made to herself and before God the night when her husband had taken her back to his home, that she would never again belong to Sartorius, she has held true to this day; for although she has constantly been incarnated by your side, yet she has never again been either your lover or your wife. She still loves you, and with a love even deeper than that which she exhibited in her previous existence as Pastophora, but it has taken a totally different channel, and

as a tender and loving mother, she has done for you what, as Pastophora or Mariamne, she could never have done.

Your love for her has also become more pure and holy, for the love of that sweet and gentle spirit has purified and consecrated your ardent and impressionable nature. She has won you over to rectitude and goodness by her holy and constant example, and in subsequent lives she has solved the double problem of remaining worthy of Christ's forgiveness, and yet ever faithful to her love.

II.

"There are, in this loud stunning tide
Of human care and crime,
With whom the melodies abide
Of the everlasting chime;
Who carry music in their hearts
Through dusky lane and wrangling marts;
Plying their daily task with busier feet,
Because their secret souls a holy strain repeat."

LAZARUS and Martha were, of course, most curious to make the acquaintance of the wonderful man, who had not only cured their uncle of the leprosy, but whose teachings had so completely changed Mary's conduct and turned her heart to goodness. They therefore sent a message to him inviting him to rest in their house while on his way from Jericho to Jerusalem, whither he was going for the Feast of Dedication.

When the day came on which he was to dine with them, they invited several of their neighbours to meet him, amongst others, Simon, who now lived in his own house near Bethany, and I, who, after Mary's departure from Jerusalem, had been obliged to return to my father's house in that village.

Jesus soon arrived with a few of his disciples, I can hardly recollect now which of them; but

he sat down in the porch looking upon the glorious view which stretched out before the house over the rocky wilderness towards the Dead Sea, while Mary, forgetful of all around her but the presence of her dear Lord, threw herself at his feet, and sat there drinking in every precious word and syllable that fell from his lips.

Martha, on whom rested all the cares of the household, was very busy all this time arranging the table and looking after the servants in their various offices; in her great anxiety to do honour to her guest, she scarcely knew which way to turn, and it grieved her to see her sister heedless of all her trouble, and so engrossed in listening to Jesus. Twice she turned to me and called my attention to what she chose to call "Mary's grand ways," and she said, in a sorrowful tone,

"Miriam, I much fear that my sister is falling back again into her sinful ways."

Her anger was at last aroused. She was only anxious to entertain the Master with all the honour and respect due to a Rabbi, but she cared little for his doctrines, and much less for the words he uttered. She thought too much about the guest, and too little about Him who had come not to be ministered unto, but to minister. In the heat of her temper she cried:

"Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me."

Jesus looked up at her in astonishment, and then mildly rebuked her in those famous words—

"Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things, but one thing is needful, and Mary hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken away from her."

After this little digression the party progressed rightly enough, and Martha, in the conviction that Jesus had left the house with a due sense of admiration for her good management, quite forgot her sister's "*misbehaviour,*" and the lesson which he had administered to her through it, which was that He would rather be served "in spirit and in truth" than by mere conventionalities and outward forms of reverence.

Should we not also learn something from these words of Christ, and arrive at the conviction that mental devotion is preferable to the mere outward show of religion?

III.

"Ah me! for aught that ever I could read,
Could ever hear of tale or history,
The course of true love never did run smooth."

SHAKSPEARE.

MARY, although she had recently awakened to a new condition, and now felt as if her soul had been liberated from a terrible conflict with its own self, had not yet forgotten the lover she had abandoned, and the happy hours which she had passed with him. Shall I say that she pined for his company once more, and that even in her present virtuous resolution to be good, and repentant of the past, she regretted that man who had been everything to her but a few weeks before? No; other women might have felt thus, other spirits less perfect, that is to say, less developed, might have still entertained some pleasant recollections, and indulged in some secret longings for the sinful past, but Mary was not an ordinary woman; her spirit had been purified and strengthened by a long series of earthly trials and probations in former existences; and she was therefore above temptation. Her great soul—great and noble even in sin, as now in holiness—could no longer desire aught but that divine love

which the teachings of Christ alone could inspire, and with which he alone could therefore satisfy her regenerated soul.

And yet she still loved the Roman. She loved him, not as she had done before, it is true, but as God has ordered us to love one another; she loved him as much as she could ever love any man, and his welfare was a source of anxiety to her. In her imagination she accused herself of being the cause of his present unhappy condition. "If it had not been for me, he would have married Olympia, and with her influence he would soon have risen to high honours, and probably have made a mark upon the history of the times." As this thought developed itself in her ardent imagination, she grew to the certain conviction that she might yet do some good. "As yet I have done nothing to deserve the forgiveness with which I have been blessed. I have been as a fruitless tree upon the face of the earth; if I could but render two noble souls happy before I die, I think I could lay down my life better satisfied with myself."

The conviction thus grew gradually in her mind that she should reconcile Martinian with Olympia, and bring about their union if possible. This alone will show you what a change her nature had undergone; for only a few weeks before she had experienced all the horrors of jea-

lousy at the mere thought that this man could be in love with some one else.

There lived with her at Bethany a young woman who had been her personal attendant during the period of her gay life at Magdala, and whom she still retained, more as a friend than as a servant. She now determined to send this woman to Jerusalem, with the idea that she might gather something from the slaves and servants at the Governor's palace concerning the lady Olympia, and the state of her heart.

The servants in those days, as in these, knew everything concerning their masters, perhaps better than their masters knew it themselves; so that Rebecca (for such was the name of Mary's messenger) soon managed to make friends with Olympia's favourite waiting-girl, a bright-eyed, dark-complexioned Persian, who was only too glad, as maids generally are, for mere gossip's sake, of course, to tell her new friend all she knew about the state of her mistress' heart.

By these means Mary was made aware that the Roman maiden was as much if not more in love than ever with the centurion, perhaps for the very reason that he treated her but coldly, and that his visits were few and far between. When he had asked her to give him back his word, and to sign a parchment stating that she had done so, in order that he might never be forced to marry her, she had done it in a fit of indignant

passion, and had sworn by all the gods of Olympus that she scorned his suit and detested him with all her heart; it was indeed a trying thing for a noble lady to be asked by the very man she best loved to sign a paper saying that she would not marry him. But Martinian had never for one moment thought of her feelings in his anxiety to retain Mary's love.

From that day they had but seldom met; and the few times they had done so, and exchanged a word, had been in the presence of Pilate and of his wife, so that anything like an explanation had been impossible between them. Olympia had been too proud to mention the occurrence even to her aunt, and had merely told her that she had refused the centurion's hand. It was indeed hard for her after this to hear Claudia's repeated reproach that she had been most foolish and hasty in thus rejecting the handsome Roman, when it had not been in her power to do otherwise.

In spite of all, she loved him; and when alone in her chamber she often pined for him, and tenderly pressed to her lips a little ring which he had given her, the only token she had ever possessed of his love.

When Mary had gathered all these facts, which made the current talk at the time amongst the few Roman servants in the city, she felt that she possessed a basis to work upon; and immediately

decided to write to Olympia, and request the honour of a private interview, that she might have the opportunity of judging for herself, and, if possible, of uniting her to her former pretender.

She did not feel so certain about Martinian, so she determined to see him beforehand and prepare him for the purpose she had at heart.

"I want you now," she said to her faithful Rebecca, "to go back to the town, and inform Martinian that I should like to see him to-night in the orchard at the back of this house."

Rebecca was astonished at these words; she feared that her mistress was fast becoming as reckless and imprudent as before.

"Do you want me to call Martinian?" she asked with astonishment.

"Yes; why should this mission alarm you?"

"You want to receive a man secretly in your garden in the middle of the night!"

"It does not look very holy, does it?"

"And when that man is Martinian, who has been . . ."

"You need not go on any further, good Rebecca; fear nothing from me now; you only see the beginning, and you must wait and see the end before you can judge of this action of mine—which, I dare say, must appear to you rather rash."

"Oh! Mary, see that your honour is concerned in this!"

"Honour is but a gift of men; they judge of

the intention by the action. God judges of the actions by the intention; and God knows the intention I have when I ask you to call Martinian to my house; He will judge my actions according to it. It is He alone whom I desire to please now."

Rebecca went back to Jerusalem that afternoon, and called upon the centurion at his old lodgings in the Antonian Tower.

Martinian's love, instead of having diminished since the day on which they had parted, as he thought, for ever, had grown stronger and more vehement. In that last interview, he had discovered in the woman he loved a charm which was quite new to him—that of virtue. Mary's last words had opened before him a wide vista, which at first had almost dazzled his eyes, but which, with time, had only made his desire to see her again all the greater. It has been often said that we esteem our conquests according to the difficulty we experience in achieving them. This is truer than we generally imagine. When Martinian had first made the acquaintance of Mary, he had found her but too ready to correspond to his love, and therefore had valued her's accordingly. He had grown accustomed to think of her as of a very beautiful woman, who would only too gladly confer her love on a handsome and wealthy Roman. He thus loved her as such women are generally loved, and was happy enough to spend

a few idle hours every day in her company; but as to marrying her, the thought had never entered his head. On the contrary, we have seen him seeking a bride in the palace of the Roman Governor, and amongst the very flower of the Roman nobility.

But all at once the despised courtisan had turned into little less than a revered saint. Her favours were now no longer to be obtained; and, to his astonishment, he saw that the woman he had lightly and carelessly loved until then, had all at once become the very star of his life's destiny, his very being, and that happiness would be an empty word without her. Thus, no wonder that at the moment, when he thought he had irrevocably lost her for ever, he should have rushed to the Roman lady and withdrawn the offer of marriage he had made her but two days previously. This was his first impulse. Since that day he had probably repented this too rash conduct towards one of his sovereign's own cousins, and no doubt he hated his own conduct to this noble lady; and yet he did not dare to show the fulness of his repentance. He felt he must go to her again; their friendship could not be put to a sudden end in this way, for all his prospects of future greatness—the very soul of his young life's ambition—lay in her power, and her anger and resentment were to be dreaded. But he dreaded Mary's unhappiness

still more. He dared not again wound his revered Mary, whom he every day loved more and more, as he saw her in his imagination gradually rising from the objects associated with her former course of life towards the holiness and sanctity of the truly virtuous woman.

The unexpected visit of Rebecca to his apartments had upon him a most extraordinary effect.

"What news dost thou bring me from thy mistress? Does she at last show pity for me?" were his first words, as he beheld her standing by his couch.

"She does so."

The centurion's eyes sparkled with joy.

"Oh, speak!" he exclaimed.

"She awaits thee to-night."

"To-night?"

"At the back of her house in the orchard at nightfall."

Martinian could hardly believe his senses.

"Ah! Rebecca, thou givest me life. Take this purse; it contains but a few Darics, but it is all I have with me at this moment."

He took from his belt the well-filled purse, and placed it in the girl's hands. She hardly knew what to do, for she felt that if Martinian had known the true motive of her mistress in sending for him, he would not have given it to her. She could hardly take a reward for a service which he would but too soon see under a

very different light from what he at that moment imagined.

"Dost thou hesitate, girl?" he said, noticing her anxious look and manner.

The thought suddenly flashed through her mind, that perhaps if he saw her hesitate to receive his money, he would suspect something, and not make his appearance at Bethany; so, being only too ready to pocket the gold, she seized this but too poor excuse, and soon afterwards left the Tower once more, for the village outside the walls.

Night soon arrived, and with it the enamoured Roman, who had wandered through the different orchards of the village since early in the afternoon, anxiously watching the sun's course, and thinking it would never set.

At the appointed time, Mary made her appearance. She was no longer attired in Persian silks and Asiatic embroideries. Her golden locks were not, as they had been formerly, braided and adorned with Roman jewels and foreign stones, which sparkled as they caught the glimmer of the distant stars. She wore a plain gray-coloured robe, which touched the ground all round her and rose to her very throat, carefully concealing those delicately-moulded charms which before she had so lavishly exposed. Her hair was combed back upon her forehead, and twisted at the back without jewels or ornaments of any kind. But even thus

she looked beautiful enough to turn any one's head. Martinian experienced this, and, falling on his knees before her, he exclaimed:

"Give me thine hand to kiss, most beautiful Magdalene! Allow me at least to express thus the happiness I feel at being permitted once more to be near thee."

"When I saw thee last, Martinian," began the beautiful Jewess, heedless of his passionate words, and of the still more passionate kiss which he imprinted on her delicate hand, "I little thought that I should so soon call thee to me; but since that day on which we parted at Jerusalem, I have been thinking that it was not enough for me to leave thee, but that I should also try and repair the harm I have done thee, by bringing about a reconciliation between thee and the Lady Olympia."

"Olympia!"

"Yes."

"What is she to me? I love thee only. I shall never be her husband."

"She loves thee."

"Impossible!"

"I am convinced of it."

"Well, even if she does, I love her not."

"Hast thou no pity for her?"

"Thou hast none for me."

"Ah! Martinian, how little dost thou comprehend all that I feel for thee!"

The Roman looked up at her once more: his eyes were full of fire.

"Thou lovest me, then?"

"Yes."

"Oh, happiness!"

"But not in the way thou thinkest."

"No matter how. I love thee. Try to love me, if it is only for the sake of that love. I offer thee my hand once more. Wilt thou accept it this time?"

Mary paused a moment, then she said in a firm voice:

"Yes, I accept it! But mind, rash lover, I will dispose of it as I choose, for thou hast made me a free gift of it."

"Mary!"

"Thou must do something for me too. Thou must be very amiable to Olympia, and make it up with her."

"Olympia! — always Olympia! Dost thou suppose she would like me better for sacrificing thee? Dost thou think she will ever believe my words after what has passed?—and believe that I must be true to her because I am false to thee?"

"She loves thee. Love will forgive everything."

"I believe thee not."

"Thou wilt then see for thyself. Come here to-morrow after mid-day, and, hidden behind yonder vine, thou wilt hear the state of her heart."

"What dost thou intend?"

"Leave that to me. But remember to be to-morrow after mid-day behind yonder vine."

She once more permitted him to carry her hand to his lips; and without another word she entered the house, where she sat down at a table, and, taking her inkhorn from her belt, she wrote the following words upon a piece of parchment:

"Fair lady, noble daughter of the Cæsars, if thou wilt know the happy future which awaits thee, go to-morrow at mid-day to the village of Bethany, where, behind the orchard of the third house, thou wilt meet

"RALOUKA THE SORCERESS."

IV.

> "Du Erde warst auch diese Nacht beständig
> Und athmest neu erquickt zu meinen Füssen,
> Beginnest schon mit Lust mich zu ungeben,
> Du regst und rührst ein kräftiges Beschliessen
> Zum höchsten Dasein immer fort zu streben."
>
> GOETHE.

THIS strange epistle was delivered to the fair Roman by her favourite waiting-maid, the Persian damsel with the bright sparkling eyes. It was with a strange mixture of pleasure and of scorn that she read it.

"I suppose the old witch wants to get money from me," she exclaimed; but suddenly turning her swan-like neck towards her slave, she said: "I will go; have the horses prepared for this afternoon."

A few weeks before, Olympia would have been too proud to have acceded so readily to the invitation of an unknown woman; but hunger tames beautiful young girls even as it does the beasts of the field; and Olympia had lately been yearning for news of Martinian. It is true that the epistle she held in her hand made no mention whatever of the Roman, but yet her heart told her that it was something concerning him; and

this was why she had so suddenly changed her mind, and determined to go to the place appointed.

Later in the day, when the horses were ready in the courtyard; looking like the lovely ghost of herself, her graceful slimness wrapped in a soft white tunic embroidered with gold, which modelled the perfect limbs it covered; her brow adorned with the innumerable curls of an impossible-coloured wig, such as was then the height of fashion in Rome; and her rounded and infantine mouth and cheeks, in spite of the thick vermillion which covered them, suggesting mildness and innocence—Olympia crossed the sumptuous *atrium*, descended the marble steps of the *vestibulum*, and mounted the snow-white mare which was to convey her across Mount Olivet to the village of Bethany.

Slowly she rode up the steep mountain-path, followed by her servants, who also accompanied her on horseback, until she reached the first houses of the village, where she dismounted, and, accompanied only by her Persian maid, she sought the appointed spot, causing no small excitement amongst the good inhabitants, who had never in their lives before seen such a cavalcade passing through their quiet village.

At the gate of the third orchard she was met by Rebecca, who was commissioned by her mistress to conduct the Roman lady to her presence.

Her pulses throbbing with excitement—for she felt that she was doing something daringly defiant for Martinian's sake—and she was not sorry for it —Olympia entered the garden, and was completely taken off her guard when she beheld, standing in a bower of wild jasmine and roses, not an old witch, as she had expected, but a handsome, imposing figure enveloped in a black mantle, embroidered with mysterious cabalistic signs in gold and red. Her astonishment became even greater when this figure uncovered herself, and she saw before her the most beautiful woman she had ever beheld in her life.

"Are you Ralouka the Pythoness?" she at last murmured, when she had recovered herself enough to speak.

"Yes, beautiful Olympia, I am indeed she who has written to you, and at whose call you have come."

"You have promised to show me my future: can you indeed read that mysterious book of life on which our fate is written?"

"I know everything, noble lady. I can read your heart, and there I see your future as distinctly as upon the golden pages of that book you speak of."

Olympia folded her pretty little jewelled hands over her breast, as if she would fain hide her beating heart from the penetrating gaze of the sorceress.

"You need fear nothing, Olympia, for all that I can at this moment read in your heart is one word—one single word—*love.*"

"No, indeed," burst out the Roman beauty, feeling something not unlike bashful timidity before a superior for the very first time in her life; "you are very much mistaken."

"Why need you fear, noble lady? is not love a divine passion, one of which the gods themselves are proud? Ah love! I will tell you what is love. To love is to build on this earth a perfect Elysium of bliss—a shrine wherein to worship hope—a Paradise where life is for ever young, and where all combines to consecrate the sanctuary of bliss. To love is to live. To love is the intense all-consuming desire which makes us wish another's nerves to vibrate to our own; that the beams of another's eyes should kindle at the same fire, and mingle and melt into our own; that lips of luscious sweetness should reply to lips quivering and burning with our heart's best food. This is love. This, lady, is what I read in your heart; a desire which burns and flows through your veins like molten fire, and yet a desire full of coyness—a sweet feeling which binds you to life, and yet a sweet full of bitterness. A horrible pain which makes your frame tremble with hope deferred, and yet a pain full of happiness—fed by desires, nursed in delights, aroused by jealousy, never extinguished, heightened by ingratitude.

What is this secret anguish—this all-devouring flame—but love?"

These cordial pleading tones, which so well described the state of her feelings, and vibrated on the chords of her heart like soft music, seemed to flow as soothingly as a warm stream over Olympia's agitated soul.

But behind that green arbour there was another living, breathing, palpitating soul, on whose heart these words had a very different effect. Martinian felt as if his whole being were undergoing a torture which would soon end by extinguishing his life altogether. To hear these passionate accents from the mouth of the woman he loved so distractedly, and yet not to be able to rush out and clasp her to his beating heart, was more than he could well bear. There, before him, stood his two loves,—the noble maiden he had so shamefully discarded, and that ideal woman for whom he would have gladly given his very life.

Olympia's heart had beat faster and faster as those words had penetrated it, and now she no longer tried to conceal her emotion. Her head hung carelessly on one side, her wig had dropped back from her forehead and displayed the abundant black locks which in vain it tried to hide, her white tunic hung in rich folds around her, and one of her bracelets dropped on the ground, for she had quite lost all control over herself, she was hurried along by a torrent which she could

not stem, and felt that her heart would break if she did not at once give it full freedom to own and proclaim its love.

Mary watched her attentively, but with moistened eyes, and as she saw the lady of fashion fast giving way to the more natural feelings of the enamoured maiden, she murmured in a sweet low tone, with a music such as it only could find from her lips, the name of their mutual lover, "Martinian!"

Olympia looked up at Mary as she heard the sweet music of this well-known name, and taking both her hands in hers she anxiously enquired in an eager but half-whispering tone,

"You know him—you have seen him? what does he say? what has become of him?"

"You love him?" answered Mary, with a sure voice.

"Alas! how can I hide it from you? But he shall never know it; the cruel, faithless monster, the impostor, who has thus vilely played with my affections. I shall die, I know, for he will never come back to me; but I will never betray my secret; I feel too proud still for that. He shall never have occasion to boast of having killed me with his inconstancy."

All this Olympia had said, urged on by a mysterious necessity to free herself from something that oppressed her as if it would break her heart. Now she fell half-unconscious upon

Mary's neck and sobbed aloud, pronouncing broken sentences between her tears which could not fail to affect deeply the sensitive heart of the centurion, who was an unseen witness to this pathetic scene.

"I love him—you are right, Ralouka—I love him—and I would gladly die if it were necessary to save his life—the cruel—cruel wretch—Magdalene! Magdalene! how I hate her very name. . . . . She takes him away from me—the vile siren who clasps him in her deceitful arms until he is unconscious of all else! Ah! and I love him all the time!—and I die for him!—in solitude and in despair!"

Fresh sobs once more interrupted this unconscious flow of words, but Olympia had now delivered her soul from the until then unconfessed weight which lay so heavily upon it, under impulses which she had not known before. She had confessed all, although she had sworn to herself never to let one word escape her mouth which might betray the deep secret of her heart.

Mary's immediate consciousness was one of immense sympathy and satisfaction,—sympathy without alloy, for she was too much moved at that moment to feel the pangs of jealousy; she could perceive that this feeling might turn into jealousy when she should have recovered her power over the sympathy that now overpowered every other feeling. With her usual tendency to over-estimate

the good in others, she felt a great out-going of her heart towards that poor suffering girl who sobbed so confidingly upon her breast, for she could not but pity the poor lady after the ingenuous and deep emotion with which she had opened her heart to her.

"You have promised to show me my future, Ralouka, speak, I pray you. I am dying to know the worst at once."

Fortunately Olympia was too much overcome by her own anxiety when she pronounced these words to notice that Mary was too much agitated to answer her, and that her heart was at that moment struggling against the current of her own feelings in order to appear calm and unconcerned before the rival she was so nobly and so disinterestedly helping in her love.

"That woman," exclaimed the Roman maiden, her thoughts succeeding each other in her mind with the rapidity of lightning, "that woman who so vilely deceives him and holds him in her mercenary arms; that woman, what of her?"

Mary started as if a knife had been plunged into her breast, but she evinced no outward signs of anguish, and with a sure voice, which showed how well she had learnt to smother her deepest feelings, she said—

"*Mary Magdalene is dead.*"

Martinian felt fast changing into stone in his hiding-place, for he knew only too well that these words were addressed to him.

"Dead!" exclaimed the maiden in a voice which badly concealed her joy. "Dead! Mary Magdalene dead!"

"Yes, she is dead to the Roman, and to all other men, for ever; you need no longer fear her; she cannot hurt you now."

Olympia seemed to breathe with greater ease after this, and began to arrange the disordered folds of her tunic, in which she seemed enveloped as if in a cloud.

"You give me new life with that news, Ralouka; but the future you promised to show me—where is it?"

"Here," exclaimed Mary, withdrawing with her hand the hanging curtain of green which hid the Roman, who now presented himself before Olympia for the first time.

Her first impulse was to run towards him and throw herself into his arms, but she quickly checked herself and said in an agitated voice—

"Vile deceiver—thou hast arranged this before-hand, thou hast been there all the time playing the eaves-dropper! . . . ."

"No, by Jupiter—Olympia, I swear to thee—"

"Swear not, noble Martinian," said Mary, interrupting him, and then turning to Olympia, she continued, "And what does it matter even if he had planned this meeting before-hand, was it not the only way of discovering the true feelings of his best beloved?"

"It was all a trap, then, and I foolishly have let myself be drawn into it, by a paid actress who has so successfully played the part of the sorceress.—Ralouka, I congratulate you on your acting!"

"By all the Gods of heaven, Olympia, thou art mistaken," burst forth Martinian half blinded with rage.

"Let her believe what she likes, Martinian, I have done my duty, her thanks could hardly add to my happiness. Noble daughter of Rome, behold thy husband; he has made me a free gift of his hand, I could not do better than place it between thine. May the God Almighty make you both as happy as I could desire," and then in a lower tone which only Martinian could hear, she added, "*and may she love thee as I have loved!*"

With a firm step she left them alone in the garden, feeling that her trying mission was now at an end, and thanking God in her heart for having given her strength enough to accomplish it.

Olympia and Martinian remained alone opposite each other, speechless, for they were both too much moved to speak. At last Martinian taking the jewelled hand of his companion between his own, said to her—

"You have heard her words, Olympia, she has placed my hand in yours, will you be my wife?"

"Who is she?"

"Never attempt to know, Olympia, let it suffice you that she is one whose word is law to me. You love me, you cannot now deny it; will you then grant me a free pardon for my mistrust, and consequent vile conduct to you, which, believe me, I deeply repent, and be my much loved wife?"

Olympia did not answer him in words, but she leant fondly on his arm and allowed him to conduct her out of the garden, and into the road where her horses and attendants awaited her.

V.

> "From every house the neighbours met.
> The streets were fill'd with joyful sound,
> A solemn gladness ever crown'd
> The purple brows of Olivet.
> Behold a man raised up by Christ!
> The rest remaineth unreveal'd;
> He told it not; or something seal'd
> The lips of that Evangelist."
>
> TENNYSON.

MARY'S heart was sore, as sore could be. She had never anticipated that she would have suffered so deeply in performing the hard task she had imposed upon herself. Now that it was all over she felt lonely and sad; she had sacrificed her happiness, nay, perhaps even that of Martinian, in order to perform what she had considered to be her duty, and with a heavy heart she lay down upon the grass and wept.

She was disturbed by her sister Martha, who suddenly had come upon her after having sought her in vain all through the house and the grounds.

"Mary, Mary, is it possible that thou canst stand thus idly moping in the garden whilst thy brother Lazarus is dying!"

Mary seemed to awaken as if from a dream.

"Is Lazarus worse?"

Martha did not answer this question. She had now for the first time noticed the gorgeous and strange tunic which her sister wore.

"What mean these strange garments, Mary? Art thou already returning to the vanities and abominations of the Gentiles?"

Mary heeded not her words. It has been said that "it requires more grace to be silent under provocation than to be eloquent in the defence of truth." And so it does! There is a time to speak, and it needs grace to enable us to do so, but there is also a time to be silent, and it needs even greater grace to enable us to resist the angry words which but too readily flow to our lips.

After a time she inquired again—

"Is our brother really worse?"

"He is—and you do nothing to alleviate his sufferings. It is unkind, Mary, to leave me to perform all the duties of the sick-room alone, and to pass your time in dress and frivolity."

"I can do nothing, Martha. You well know how stupid I am, and how awkward every useful action comes to me—but I can send for Jesus; He alone can help us in our misfortune."

"I never thought of that! Why, you are worth your weight in gold, child, when you will only be sensible and give your mind to some serious thoughts. Jesus!—of course He will cure Lazarus if we could only get Him to come in time."

"Have faith, Martha, and all will turn out well."

As they went into the house to despatch a messenger instantly to Jesus, who was at the time on his road to the city, they saw in the distance a gay cavalcade on horseback. It was Olympia returning to Jerusalem, and by her side rode Martinian, gallantly leading her white mare over the rocky pass.

Mary looked at them in silence, and the tears rose to her deep blue eyes. Was she jealous? I can hardly say, but I am certain that at that moment she secretly wished she had never meddled in her lover's affairs.

Lazarus was indeed much worse. The messenger they had sent in search of Jesus returned to the house alone, as he had gone. Jesus could not come at that time.

Three days passed, and at last Lazarus died in the arms of his two loving sisters. It was only after he had lain in the grave four days that Jesus made his appearance in Bethany. The deeply-afflicted Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met him and said—

"Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died, but I know that even now whatever thou wilt ask of God, God will give *it* thee."

Jesus said to her—

"Thy brother shall rise again."

Martha, not understanding his words, answered—

"I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day."

Jesus, seeing her mistake, said unto her—

"I am the Resurrection and the Life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?"

She said unto him, "Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world."

After saying which, she ran back to the house, and called Mary, saying, "The Master is come, and calleth for thee."

As soon as she heard this, she arose quickly and ran to Jesus, who was still some way from the house in the road which ran through the village. The Jews then who were with her in the house, and had come to condole with the sisters and comfort them in their sorrow, when they saw Mary thus rising hastily and running out of the house, followed her, thinking that she was going to her brother's grave to weep there.

When Mary came where Jesus was, and saw Him, she fell down at His feet, saying, as her sister had done—

"Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died."

When Jesus saw her weeping on the ground at His feet, her long golden hair hanging in pro-

fusion around her beautiful face, and her large heavenly eyes veiled in tears, He was much moved, and He groaned in the spirit and was troubled. And He asked, "Where have ye laid him?"—and He wept.

Yes, Jesus wept. Tears of sympathy arose to those more than human eyes at the sight of so much grief and bitter sorrow—for Jesus is tenderly compassionate of His earthly children, and cannot witness their sorrows unmoved; He is a sure friend in time of trouble, and will ever come, to those who love and seek his sympathy and aid.

The Jews, seeing His tears, said amongst themselves—

"Behold, how He loved him!"

And some of them also said—

"Could not this man, which opened the eyes of the blind, have caused that even this man should not have died?"

Jesus in the meantime was taken to the sepulchre, which was at the back of the orchard, and not far from the spot where Eleazer had been buried. When He arrived in front of it, he commanded them, with a still much moved voice, to remove the stone which covered the entrance; but Martha interposed, saying—

"Lord, by this time he stinketh, for he hath been dead four days."

Jesus said unto her, "Said I not unto thee,

that if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God?"

Then they took away the stone from the opening of the grave; and Jesus, lifting up His eyes to heaven, exclaimed—

"Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard me." Yet there had been no audible prayer made to God; so that in truth, as Origen suggests, "He was heard before He prayed"—or, rather, it was that His will being in unison with that of God, His inward prayer was instantly heard and accorded on the spot. He then added in a low voice, which none could hear, "I knew that Thou hearest me always; but, because of the people which stand by, I said it, that they may believe that Thou hast sent me."

And when He had thus spoken, He cried with a loud voice—"Lazarus, come forth!"

And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave-clothes, and with his face bound about with a napkin; and, behold! he was once more alive!

VI.

"Thrice happy they who seek th' abode
Of peace and pleasure in their God!
Who spurn the world, its joys despise,
And grasp at bliss beyond the skies!"

IBRAHIM BEN ADHAM.

THE joy of the sisters knew no bounds, and even the Jews who had come to see them could not help now believing in the Son of Man, for they had indeed seen the glory of God.

But for fear of the priests and Pharisees, whose attention had been naturally aroused by this miracle, they induced Jesus to retire to a little town not far from the wilderness, called Ephraim, where He lived with His disciples.

The great Feast of the Passover was, however, near at hand, and it was the custom amongst the Jews to proceed before it to Jerusalem to purify themselves. Jesus, who also intended to go to the city for the Feast, left Ephraim soon afterwards and openly went towards Jerusalem, for He knew that His hour was nigh at hand, and He no longer sought to avoid it in retirement.

On the Sabbath he reached Bethany, where Simon, the man whom he had cured of leprosy in

Galilee, gave him a great supper. His two nieces, Martha and Mary, were also there. The former, acting as lady or mistress of the house, served the guests. His nephew, Lazarus, who was now raised from the dead, was with his sisters at this supper. There were also present many Jews, who had come on purpose from Jerusalem to see Lazarus—who, of course, continued to be an object of great curiosity since his resurrection.

While Jesus was still at table, Mary brought forth a handsome box of alabaster, which contained liquid Nard, and breaking it in two, she poured the costly ointment over His head.

Some of those present, amongst others Judas Iscariot, were indignant at this lavish act, which they considered as a mere waste of money.

Judas, who had the bag of the little community of Jesus, burst forth in angry words, saying:

"Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence and given to the poor?"

But Jesus said: "Let her alone; why trouble ye her? she hath wrought a good work on me, for ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good; but me ye have not always. She hath done what she could: she is come beforehand to anoint my body for the burying. Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole

world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her."

In spite of these flattering words, Mary was much troubled by Jesus' speech. Had she indeed anointed his precious body for the burying? These words, joined with others which she had heard him pronounce, showed her but too clearly that he considered his end to be nigh at hand, and she was very sorrowful as she thought of this.

That night he slept in Simon's house, and on the morrow the people who had come to the feast, chiefly the Galileans, who loved him above all others, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, took branches of palm trees and went forth to meet him, crying, "Hosanna! blessed is the King of Israel, that cometh in the name of the Lord."

And they accompanied Jesus, who entered Jerusalem riding on a young ass, amidst the cries and shouts of the enthusiastic multitude.

But not even this triumphal entry into the treacherous city could dispel Mary's fears, for she knew but too well that the priests and Pharisees had determined on his death; and those fears were not groundless, for a few days later she heard of his betrayal by one of his own disciples, and that he had been taken prisoner to the palace of Annas.

Caiaphas was at this time high priest, but Annas, who had been high priest before him, and

was besides his father-in-law, was a man of much greater influence with the people, and continued, in some ways to act as high priest.

This news gave Mary one last hope. Some time must pass before Jesus could be tried by Annas, and then by Caiaphas—who, after all, could pass no sentence on him, the Jews being for the time deprived of the power of inflicting death, so that, in the course of time, he must be brought before Pilate, the Roman governor, who alone could sentence him. Her mind was made up in an instant. She would go to the palace of the Roman, and throw herself at Claudia's feet. She could influence her husband, and cause him to pardon Jesus, for whom he could not possibly entertain malice or envy, as the Jews did.

After a sleepless night she came to Jerusalem with the first appearance of the dawn, and hastened to Pilate's palace in search of Claudia. As she went she heard the multitude clamorously demanding the death of Jesus. She looked at the faces of these cruel Jews, and saw no pity, nothing but a stern, cruel expression of hatred, plainly visible on all of them. She raised her eyes to heaven, but received thence no relief. In this extremity her bleeding heart, in silent fervour, addressed its supplications to Him who perfectly knows every thought of the human mind.

When she reached the governor's palace, she ascended the marble steps, took off her veil, and

entered the empty, silent apartments. A servant met her at last, and to him she entrusted her message.

"The Lady Claudia is at this moment engaged in her chamber with her niece, the Lady Olympia, and Martinian, the centurion," answered the servant.

Her heart received a sudden shock. She had not been prepared to meet her former lover, and under such peculiar circumstances, but her present affliction was too great even to permit her to give heed to her feelings.

"My errand is all pressing; it is a matter of life and death; I must see thy mistress."

"Well," quoth he, "I will return and inform her of thy errand and of its urgency."

A few minutes later she was shown into the Roman lady's presence. Fortunately for her Martinian had left the apartment, but Olympia was there, as gracefully attired as ever.

As she entered, the two ladies hastily arose from their seats, each giving a low cry of astonishment, as they respectively discovered in the stranger, the one Mary Magdalene, the mistress of Martinian, and the other Ralouka, the sorceress. Olympia's limbs appeared to tremble under her loose robe, such was her surprise.

Claudia was the first to speak; and her voice was moved with scorn and indignation rather than with surprise as she said:

"What dost thou want with me, Mary Magdalene?"

At the mention of this hated name, Olympia raised her eyes towards Mary.

"Is this woman Mary . . . Mary Magdalene?" she asked with a trembling voice.

"Yes, child, she is indeed that degraded woman who for so long a time has kept Martinian spell-bound to her side."

Olympia was too much agitated to utter a single word in defence of her who had done so much for her, and to whom she was indebted for all her present happiness; the thought that Mary Magdalene and Ralouka were one and the same seemed to overpower her for the moment, and she covered her face with her hands.

Mary now felt that she must explain the object of her visit, which seemed to produce such varied effect upon the two ladies before her.

"I come, noble Claudia, to beg thy influence for a just cause—that of Jesus of Nazareth, who is at this moment being tried by thy husband the Governor."

"What woman! hast thou now taken to him—to that man who entitles himself the King of the Jews? I warn thee that thou wilt get little out of him: he is as poor as a slave, and his fate is sealed. He will die: thy own nation wills it so."

It was Mary who now gave a cry of horror,

and covered her face with her hands. Could it be possible that her interest for Jesus should be viewed in this base light? Was it possible that she should listen to such words as these?

"Oh, Claudia!" she exclaimed, "thou art greatly mistaken. I am nought to Jesus of Nazareth, who is far above all earthly passions; but he is all to me. I love and deeply reverence that holy one, who cured my uncle of the leprosy and snatched my brother from the jaws of death, restoring him to life who had been dead four days. Yes, I love Jesus with all the passionate strength of my soul—but I love him to adore and worship. Oh! noble Claudia, forgive me if ever I have offended thee most unintentionally. Be generous and noble at this moment, and rise above all earthly considerations—for this matter is of life and death. Save this holy man! Oh! Claudia, consider his life is in thy hands at this moment!"

"Thou art mad, woman! How canst thou expect me to believe thy words, deceiver and prostitute as thou art! He saved thy brother, thou sayest, from death, and yet himself he cannot save———"

"Stop, Claudia!" now interposed Olympia, who had at last found power to speak. "Stop, Claudia! insult not this woman, for to her I owe my happiness . . . and my husband. Ah! if you knew all . . . it was she . . . But no matter. Grant

her request now, dear aunt. Let me beg of thee to intercede with thy noble husband to save the life of this Jesus as she wills it; for I owe her more than life, and must try and help her in my turn."

Mary, in her joy, fell on her knees and kissed her rival's hand, so thankful was she to her for these words, which filled her heart once more with hope.

Claudia, in the meantime, was looking at Olympia in mute astonishment; she could not imagine how her niece could ever have had anything to do with this woman, who for so long a time had been the mistress of her intended husband.

"What means this, Olympia? Art thou, too, gone mad to-day?"

"No, aunt, I know well what I am doing; but no time is to be lost. For my sake, dear aunt, interfere in favour of Jesus. I will explain all to thee later on."

Claudia inquired no more at that moment, for she saw that her niece was too much moved to explain matters; but she called one of her attendants, and told him—

"Go immediately to thy master, who is now in the judgment-seat, and tell him from me to have nothing to do with that just man he is now trying, for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him."

When the servant had left the apartment, she turned towards Mary and said—

"There, Mary, that will stop him if anything will. Art thou now pleased with me, Olympia?"

The young girl flew into her aunt's arms; while Mary, too much moved to express her thanks to the noble lady in words, lifted her clasped hands on high as she raised her eyes to heaven; then with one deep look of overwhelming gratitude in her expressive face, she lowly bowed her head to Claudia as she left the apartment, and hurried out of the palace.

VII.

> "A prison! Heavens, I loathe the hated name;
> Famine's metropolis,—the sink of shame;
> A nauseous sepulchre, whose craving womb
> Hourly inters poor mortals in its tomb."

I HAVE said very little about myself to-night, dearest Walter; but the truth is, that my life at that period of my spirit's history was aught but interesting. After Mary's final return to her family in Bethany, I, too, had gone back to my aged father, Josias, as I think I told you when speaking of the feast in Martha's house, at which Mary had sat at Jesus' feet.

Since that day the old routine of my youth had begun again. The household duties occupied all my time; no interesting events of any kind came to enliven my existence; and as my father had grown older and weaker, these duties had naturally increased for me. At that time I remember cursing my lot, which seemed to bind me for ever to the obscure roof of a miserable little carpenter's shop in a retired village of Judea; but now that I can see beyond the limited horizon of human ideas of life, I can perceive the motive and the true reason of this dreary solitude and monotonous routine. I imagined in my blind ignorance that

my life was wasted, but I now know that it was most precious time gained for the discipline of my proud wayward spirit.

In my previous existence as Ananda, that spirit had been permitted to go free, and act in all ways as it pleased, which had naturally served to increase the outward manifestation of my evil passions and animal inclinations; but in this life I was kept back by events and circumstances over which I had no control, and could not render myself mistress, as I had done when Ananda; so that this quiet and humble life was intended to subdue my pride and calm my troubled and restless spirit before entering once more on the battle-field of human life, which all spirits must fight for themselves before coming out conquerors—conquerors of themselves—and thus attaining perfection.

But about this time a great calamity befel me, which was at the same time a punishment for my past sins and a discipline for the future. I began to lose my sight. How dreadful this is none can tell but one who has experienced it; and the worst of all was, that instead of getting any compassion from my neighbours, who were for the most part adherents to the pharisaical notions, they one and all turned against me, saying that this calamity could only befall one who had sinned before the Lord; for you know, Walter, that in those days illnesses of all kinds were considered to be punishments inflicted by God

for sins. I also understood it thus. I could not help feeling that this dreadful trial was a punishment for some sin of mine—but for which? I could not tell, however low and undeveloped my poor spirit had been in that trying existence, I had not, at least to my knowledge, committed a single sin for which I could, in justice, be thus severely punished. How ignorant I was of the dreadful crimes of Ananda, and of the severe punishment and expiation which they merited!

The Jews were right in believing all illnesses and misfortunes to be punishments for sin, but they naturally attributed them to sins committed in this life, for they ignored the fact of our pre-existence, however much they might suppose it, and however much they might have speculated on the subject, from perceiving that misfortune and suffering did not always immediately follow upon sin and crime, and that happiness and good health were not such sure signs of virtue as they had at first supposed them to be.

One day as I was sitting outside the porch of my father's house, trying in vain to get through my needle-work in spite of my bad eyesight—for there was no other woman in the house who could have done it for me, a soldier came up and inquired if I were Miriam of Bethany, whose father was a carpenter.

I answered him that I was she for whom he enquired, upon which he told me that my brother

Barabbas, whom we had thought dead for so many years, was at that moment a prisoner in Jerusalem, and that he had asked permission of his jailors to see me.

That very day I hastened to the city to embrace my poor lost brother once more.

I had no difficulty in entering the prison where he had now been for some time awaiting his trial, and was soon pressing him to my heart.

He told me all his adventures since the day he had left us on his journey to Rome, and the present crime for which he had been imprisoned. It was then, for the first time, that I learnt Caius Sartorius's wicked device of murdering Ben-Isaac and carrying off his wife. All his strange conduct of late was now explained to me.

"You may be sure," my brother said, "that he will do all in his power to get me free as soon as possible, for fear that I might denounce him as the instigator of the old miser's death."

As we were talking, behold! who should enter the dungeon but the Roman himself!

"Cheer up, Barabbas," he said as he came in; "I have at last hit on an infallible plan for thy escape.——But who is this woman?—Some sweetheart of thine, I have no doubt."

As he said this, he looked at me straight in the face, and was not a little surprised when he recognised me.

"What, Miriam! can it be you?" he exclaimed.

"She is my sister, sir," said Barabbas, not very pleased to find out that we were already acquainted; for although a villain himself, he did not like his sister to be a friend of other villains. Such is human nature!

"What is your plan, sir? How can you contrive that I should escape from these horrible damp walls?"

"Oh, escape is impossible; and as to your complaining of these walls, why, my dear fellow, you ought to be accustomed to live in a prison by this time."

Barabbas did not see the joke: his whole mind was bent on how he should be able to escape from thence.

"I have often thought of getting you away; but I have been obliged to give up that plan—your countrymen make too good jailors for that. But I have hit upon a new device, by means of which I promise to set you free, if you in your turn promise never to betray my trust. You know that the Feast of the Passover is near at hand, and that it is the custom in Judea for the people at each Passover to choose some prisoner to be set free. Now I think I can manage so that thou shouldst be the one chosen. You know that my great friend Martinian is going to marry the Lady Olympia, Pilate's niece; I will arrange

it so that he should ask the Governor to release thee."

This plan seemed very good to us both, so that Barabbas eagerly agreed to it, as also never to divulge the complicity of Caius Sartorius, or to mention his name in any way in connection with the unlucky affair of the murder, if he should be set free as he proposed.

"There is another plan of which I have thought," went on Sartorius. "And why should I give up even now, after going so far? Mariamne shall still be mine if I live."

"What? blind man! Seest thou not that there is a fate against thy love?" exclaimed Barabbas. "No good can come of thy schemes if that accursed passion is ever their object. Jehovah is determined against thee. Would thou, vain man! dare oppose thyself to His power?"

"I dare all. I tell thee, fellow, she shall be mine in spite of thy Jehovah!"

"Ah! but God is all-powerful. He wills it not that a daughter of His chosen people should marry a Gentile;—and it will never be!"

"We shall see!" said the Roman in a defiant tone, which showed my brother that he would brave a thousand dangers to possess the object of his ambition. Then turning to me, he said—"Miriam, thou knowest Mariamne?"

"No," I answered, "I have never seen her to my knowledge."

"Well, then, thou must make her acquaintance, and manage it so that on a certain day she shall be mine."

"How?"

"Ye need not ask me—thou art clever enough to manage that, I warrant. Thou shalt be well paid for thy trouble. Arrange it so that this day week, when thy brother will be free, the fair Mariamne shall be ready to start for Rome, and then the four of us shall quit Jerusalem for ever. In Rome, thou and thy brother will have happiness and wealth"—and then, in a lower tone, which did not reach our ears, he added—"and I will take good care that ye shall be kept out of my way."

At first I emphatically refused to do this for him, but the bribe was too great. I could not resist it long; and so, after a few words on either side, I promised to see the lady of his love, and to induce her to fly with him from her country and her friends.

VIII.

"Oh, mad folly! to kill one who raised the dead, and to release a murderer who slew the living!"

St. Augustine.

That very afternoon I directed my steps to Nephtali's house in the upper market-place. I crossed the open square in front of it, of which I spoke to you two nights ago, and entered the mansion. An old slave met me at the door. At first I was at a loss to know what to do or say. How could I approach the subject to Mariamne? It was evident that if I told her at once that I had been sent by Sartorius, she would never receive me, so I simply said to the slave to announce me as a poor woman who wanted to see his mistress to beg her charity. Perhaps in this way, I thought, I shall command her attention by awakening her compassion for me.

Mariamne offered no opposition to my plan, for she consented directly to see me, and I was shown forthwith into the chamber, in which she received my message.

When I entered the room and beheld Mariamne, I stood for a second without being able to move, spell-bound to the threshold of the doorway. I was certain that I had never seen that woman

before, and yet my heart beat at her sight. I felt drawn towards her; I felt that, somehow or other, we had not been strangers in the past. How strange are these feelings of sympathy or of repulsion, which we experience every day of our lives, towards people who until that moment have been strangers to us! How extraordinary is that sensation, which Spaniards so well express by the words, "*simpatia*," "*simpatico*," "*simpatica*," which, I fear, translated into the colder language of your nation, lose half their emphasis, and scarcely convey the same meaning. I am sure, if we only knew our past lives while on earth, we would assuredly find that we have been connected with such persons in previous existences; if not, why do such feelings exist at all, and where do they originate?

Mariamne had been my own beloved daughter, when, as Pastophora, she lived in India. Could I see her again in a world where we had been so dear to each other and feel indifferent to her? Could I meet her as a stranger, and without my heart going out towards her once more?

I know not what she in her turn felt for me, but I suppose it must have been something of the same sort, for she looked at me in mute astonishment, and moved a few steps towards the doorway, where I was still standing.

I forgot my awkward mission and the object with which I had come to that house at all, and

giving way to the first impulse of my heart, I ran towards her and clasped her to my beating breast.

"Ah, poor, poor lady!" I exclaimed, unable to restrain my feelings; "thou art vilely deceived—vilely deceived!"

"What means this, good woman? hast thou a devil to speak thus?"

I could restrain myself no longer. I fell on my knees before her, and confessed to her the whole shameful plot of Sartorius for her abduction.

As she stood there before me in her widow's robes, her black hair gracefully tied back, and her sweet face pensively resting on her hand, while a plaintive expression played on her features, I thought I had never seen any one so beautiful, so fitted in every way by nature to win the heart of man.

"What shall I do?" she exclaimed, when I had finished. "What shall I do? Dangers of all kinds surround me, and that man who swears he loves me is the one I dread the most of all my enemies."

"But you love him, beautiful lady?"

"Ah me! Would to Jehovah I did not. But I shall never be his, and thou, good woman, must help me to escape from his treacherous machinations."

"I? I, who have promised to persuade thee, and to take thee to him?"

"Surely you would not force me to that now? Ah, if you knew all!—if you knew all!—you would not hesitate to take my part!"

"I do know all, noble lady," I then said; "I know how the Roman managed to seduce thee from thy husband, and how that husband forgave thy sin. I know how, since then, the same Caius Sartorius killed thy husband, that thou mightest become solely his. I know all this, Mariamne, and I do indeed take thy part. . . . I owe thee some reparation for . . . it was my brother—my own brother Barabbas, who was the instrument who has caused all this mischief—the paid, but at the same time the innocent instrument of thy misfortunes. . . . It was he who murdered thy husband!"

The beautiful woman moved back, while an expression of horror was portrayed on her features.

"Shrink not from me, lady—dismiss me not—do not turn those beautiful eyes of thine away from me with scorn and horror. I am ready to help thee now. There is something in thy face which draws me towards thee, something which makes me love thee. Oh! turn not from me, for I will do anything for thee, now that I know thee."

The beautiful Jewess turned round once more to me and gave me both her hands, which I instinctively raised to my lips.

"I, too," she said, "feel some mysterious sym-

pathy that draws me to thee, good woman ;—and I will trust thee. Dost thou know of any place where I can be hidden for a few days ? for my father's house will scarcely be a safe residence for me after what you have told me."

"There is my father's house at Bethany, but a miserable hole indeed compared with this palace ; but there thou wilt be safe at all events from all attack, because thy retreat will be unknown."

"I will think of what thou proposest. I will consult my father. Come again to-morrow, and then most likely I shall accompany thee to thy village. Farewell for to-day."

I left the room with a sore heart, for I pitied that poor lady from the depths of it. When I returned on the morrow, she received me in her old father's presence ; and she announced to me that they would both come with me to Bethany, where undoubtedly they would be safe. Nephtali was one of those unhappy persons who seem to look upon all subjects through the medium of a dark glass, which conveys a gloomy and winterly aspect to the sunniest of scenes, and invariably adopted at once the worst side of every question. According to him, his daughter could not be safe in Jerusalem until every one of the hated Romans had been expelled out of Judea.

I accompanied them to my house, and left them there under the care of my father.

My eyesight all this time was growing worse

and worse. It was with the greatest difficulty that I could see at all now, so that all these journeys backwards and forwards to Jerusalem were only accomplished under the greatest difficulty. But I was too much interested at that moment in my unfortunate brother's fate to think much of myself; so, the next morning, which was the same on which Mary Magdalene had gone to Pilate's palace to intercede with Claudia for Jesus, I bent my steps to the Tower of Antonia, with the intention of seeing Caius Sartorius.

I found that centurion in Martinian's apartments.

"What news from my Mariamne?" were his first words.

I was too much interested in keeping him in good humour to tell him the truth; so I told him that all was progressing favourably for him, and that the young widow would probably be ready to fly with him at any time.

"I have also good news for thee, Miriam: thy brother is almost sure now to obtain his liberty. Pilate has promised to offer him as the one to be set free this Passover, and I have distributed no end of money amongst the people that they should choose him. Perhaps this very afternoon we shall be able to quit Jerusalem."

This news set my heart at once at rest, but now Martinian was the one to speak.

"I also am leaving Jerusalem and Judea for ever. This night I join Olympia on the road to Cæsarea, and, with fair wind, we shall soon lose sight of this land, in which I have suffered, and loved so much."

"Hast thou then forgotten the beautiful Magdalen, noble Roman?"

"Ah, no! . . . . it is she who wills it so, for I too, like our poor friend here, have discovered that the daughters of your race can rule men as they please. I am going to marry the lady Olympia, Pilate's niece; it was Mary herself who arranged this marriage. I love her not as I love Mary, but for her sake I will try at least to make her a good husband. Tiberius has been good enough to sanction our marriage and has summoned me to his side. In Rome—glory and honour await me, and yet I leave Judea with a sad and troubled heart."

As I left the tower of Antonia and was crossing the outer court of the temple on my way to the Pretorium, I met Mary who was also on her way thither.

"Are you also going to Pilate's judgment hall?" I asked her.

"Yes."

"Is any friend of yours to be tried there this day?"

"Jesus of Nazareth."

"Oh, I forgot, I have been so interested lately in my poor brother's fate, that I have had no time

left to think of others. And so that man who calls himself the Son of God has at last fallen prisoner. I have long feared that sooner or later he would come to an unhappy end."

"Speak not thus of the Master. He has enemies enough without thee, God knows, and yet it is God's will that His son should suffer thus, for were it not so, all the power of the Pharisees and of the Romans put together could not injure him in the least, they could have no power against him except it were given them from above. I have one hope still left. You know that with the feast of the Passover the people have a right to choose a prisoner and set him free, perhaps at the last moment God will turn their hard cruel hearts and they will choose *him* to be set free."

"I am sorry to take even that last hope away from thee, Mary, but the people have been bribed beforehand by Sartorius and Martinian, and are to choose my brother Barabbas to be the one set free this day."

Mary gave a groan of agony as she heard this.

"Martinian! Martinian!" she exclaimed, "is it possible that thou shouldst oppose me thus in everything? thou hast taken my heart, wilt thou also take my God? Ah, alas! I have no right to complain. All, however, is in the hands of God, who knows best, and who can bring good out of evil if He so chooses, and use the malice of men to work His glory and the world's salvation!"

As we were still talking a noise of many voices reached our ears. As if from a numerous crowd, the cries of "Crucify Him," "Crucify Him," "To the cross," "Let him die," reached us with an awful distinctness. For one moment we both remained in a horrible state of uncertainty. Were these cries addressed to Jesus or to Barabbas? Which of the two was the one to be crucified?

One second afterwards all doubt was at an end, for my brother rushed into the court, followed by the crowd, and he pressed me to his heart. As I turned round I saw Mary lying on the ground—she had fainted!

The multitude had chosen the one who was the author of death, and were crucifying *Him* who is the author of life.

IX.

"Then pray for a soul in peril—
A soul for which Jesus died;
Ask by the cross that bore him,
And by her who stood beside.
And the angels of God will thank you,
And bend from their throne of light,
To tell you that Heaven rejoices
At the deed you have done to-night."

ADELAIDE PROCTOR.

THEN came that dreadful night of the crucifixion, with the earthquake which followed it, and which rent the veil of the temple; and many people, believing those things to have a certain mysterious relation with the death of Jesus, exclaimed—

"Perhaps, after all, this was a just man!"

And they were troubled and vexed in their spirit, repenting their choice. When Barabbas saw this, he hurried to the tower of Antonia, where Sartorius was still living, and pressed him to depart, saying—

"Thou hast promised to take me away with thee to Rome; let us leave Jerusalem at once, for the people are now sorry for what they have done, and in their fury will murder me."

The centurion was ready to depart at a mo-

ment's notice, so they both went out together by the Horse Gate, which opened on the outside of the city walls; from whence they made their way by deserted roads until they reached the Valley of Jehosaphat. Here they were met by the servants who carried the luggage, but Sartorius could not be induced to fly without his Mariamne.

"Wait here for me, Barabbas," he said; "I will not be long; thy sister and my wife are waiting for me up yonder; in less than half-an-hour we shall be on our road to Cæsarea."

With a hurried step he turned back towards the city. He ascended the steep hill, and entered, through the Dung Gate, the Upper Market Place, where Nephtali's house was situated. The streets were crowded with people, on account of the earthquake, which, though but slight, had been enough to frighten the inhabitants out of their houses, and it was with the greatest difficulty that he at last reached the open square in front of which was the house he sought.

But the object of his love was no longer there; she had flown out of his reach, and I alone answered to his loving calls.

"Where is she? where is she?" he exclaimed, trembling with rage and disappointed emotion, after he had looked everywhere for her in vain.

"She has gone," I said; "thou wilt never see her again."

Caius Sartorius was one of those whose cheeks become blanched instead of reddened by any vehement emotion. He turned deadly pale as he heard my words; even his tremulous lips lost their colour, his eyes kindled with fierce indignation, and he gasped once or twice as if for breath, before he answered, looking me full in the face—

"Then, after all, thou hast proved a traitress, Miriam!"

I trembled as I watched his kindling eyes, which, as they were fixed on mine, seemed to flash fire, and whose magnetic attraction I could not resist; however, I managed to gather courage enough to say—

"No, it is thou who wouldst have been the traitor, and I have saved thee from committing a new crime. Go hence; leave Jerusalem for ever, and forget her who will never be thine."

I naturally expected to have seen him go into a rage at these daring words of mine, and I was prepared for any outburst of passion from his disappointed love. But I was no little surprised when, uttering only a low cry, he sank upon one of the stone benches which surrounded the court in which we were, as it seemed, overpowered with emotion. His heart swelled under the steel plate which covered his breast, and hot burning tears trickled down his manly cheek.

Had he been stormy or abusive, as I expected,

I might have remained unmoved, but those tears touched me to the heart.

I approached him, and taking his hand in mine I tried to console him in his trying disappointment. Suddenly he recovered his strength; he arose, and exclaimed, in a voice with which in vain he tried to conceal the bursting sobs which rose from his heart—

"I see fate is against me; I will fight no more with it. Farewell, beloved Mariamne, we meet no more on earth!"

He moved slowly towards the door, but I could not let him go away thus. I hurried after him, and caught him by the arm—

"Are you leaving Jerusalem, as you intended?"

"Yes; thy brother is coming with me; he is waiting for me beneath the walls. Will you not accompany us out of this accursed city?"

"I cannot leave my aged father; besides, my eyesight is failing fast. I will remain in Judea, and die where I was born. . . . . Farewell, oh Roman! Thy noble conduct to-night has won my heart."

"I too cannot but admire your behaviour, Miriam, although I wish by Jupiter it had been otherwise. Farewell, thy brother will be safe in my company."

He looked at me once more, and then, with a hurried step, he left the house and was soon lost

in the darkness which enveloped the streets. Thus we parted (you and I, Walter), one thousand eight hundred years ago, never to meet again in that life, but with that last interview the last lingering spark of animosity had been extinguished in our hearts for ever, and had given place to a kindlier feeling.

A few minutes afterwards he had joined Barabbas and his servants at the bottom of the valley.

"What, alone?" he exclaimed, seeing him thus returning by himself.

"Yes, thou wast right, Barabbas, thy God has won the victory. Mariamne will never be mine."

And springing upon their horses they were soon out of sight of the city and rode on all the night in silence.

The next morning they met Martinian, who was also on his way to Cæsarea, where he intended joining Olympia and her retinue. The Centurion seemed much moved when his friend met him.

"What is the matter, Martinian," he exclaimed when he saw him. "Has anything happened?"

"Yes, the Son of God has been crucified for the sons of men. I was there, I saw him die, and now at last I can understand Mary's strange conduct —certainly he must have been more than man."

X.

"How often, oh, how often,
I had wished that the ebbing tide
Would bear me away on its bosom,
O'er the ocean wild and wide!

"For my heart was hot and restless,
And my life was full of care,
And the burden laid upon me
Seemed greater than I could bear.

"But now it has fallen from me,
It is buried in the sea,
And only the sorrow of others,
Throws its shadow over me."

LONGFELLOW.

I HAVE but little more to add to the history of that sad life, Walter.

After a few years I completely lost my sight, a punishment which my crimes as Ananda had but too well deserved. I continued living with my father until his death, supported by the kind charity of Mariamne, who never let me starve, although our means grew more and more scanty every day.

She never married again, but lived with her old father, the blessed benefactor of all the poor of Jerusalem, until her death, which took place before

the destruction of the city, and she was thus saved from suffering the miseries of the siege.

Mary Magdalene retired to the desert soon after the death of Jesus, and there lived a life of holiness and penitence, until death translated her from all earthly trials and probation, to a glorious resurrection in heaven.

My brother inhabited the city of the Cæsars for the rest of his life, and in the letters which he from time to time addressed me, he often spoke of Martinian, who having attained a high position through the influence of his wife Olympia, lived in a sumptuous villa near Tivoli.

Caius Sartorius died unmarried, but not before his name had been rendered famous in the Roman army for his courage and his repeated victories over the Goths.

And at last death came to release even me from the heavy burden and repeated trials which I had borne with as much patience as my still undeveloped spirit could then command, and to open once more for me the gates of the spirit world, where I flew with a joyful heart, as a child who returneth from school, after a long and wearisome term of discipline and study, returneth to her happy home, and to the shelter of loving hearts."

THROUGH THE AGES.

—o—

Part the Third.

THE RETURN TO EVERY-DAY LIFE.

I.

"These little things are great to little man."
GOLDSMITH.

A WEEK had elapsed since the night of the ball on board the "Numancia," during which time I had only seen Lilian Leigh once, for, as I think I have before stated, she was stopping at this time with the Countess de Guanabacoa, at her palace in Havana.

But the long and deeply interesting conversations I had held every night during that last week with my darling spirit wife, had almost made me forget the fascinations of the fair American, whose society I no longer cared for. I seemed to have lived ages during those short eight nights, and all worldly pleasures seemed now at an end for me, so poor and frivolous did they all appear after the grand world which Conchita had opened to my astonished gaze.

Whilst Lilian Leigh had remained on her visit at the Count's, I had been left entirely to my own devices, and free to pass my days as best I thought fit; but all things in this world come to an end, and with the return of that fair and

exacting enslaver to the hotel, my liberty also seemed all at once to have vanished.

Another great event had occurred in our little circle, at Havana, within the last few days, and this was the arrival of the young Duke of Miranda, the son of the handsome Duchess I so often spoke of at the sugar plantation.

As I think I have already mentioned, he had been, for some years past, in a college in England completing his education; but this being now quite finished, he had returned to the arms of his dear mother, who, to celebrate his arrival, thought fit to give a ball in her house at the Cerro, not very far from the town. To this ball I was forcibly carried by Lilian and Mrs Herbert, who would not hear of any excuse. I went to it quite against my will, as it obliged me for that night to forego the far more congenial pleasure of an interview with my Conchita.

The Quinta where the ball took place consisted of a very large house, situated in the midst of gardens and pleasure-grounds, about two miles from the town. This place had belonged to the Duchess's father before she married the Duke, a Spanish nobleman, who was travelling at the time in the island. He had fallen in love with this beautiful daughter of the tropics, and after the marriage, had taken her away in his yacht to Europe, but she had soon become tired of the colder manners and stereo-

typed conventionalities of the older world, and had returned to her native island, where she had lived ever since, the admired of all admirers, quite a queen amongst her friends. Her husband, who dared not oppose her ardent temper, had visited her from time to time, but he spent by far the greater part of his time in Paris, where he at last settled. They had only had one son, and the father insisted he should be educated in Europe. At first the Duchess refused to part from her darling child, but seeing that her husband was most determined about it, she was at last obliged to yield and allow him to be taken to Paris, and afterwards to England, where he had remained in a Jesuit college until the Duke's death, when being now grown up, he had quitted it and had spent a year travelling on the Continent with a private tutor; but the handsome Duchess had grown impatient to see him again, and had written letter after letter, pressing him to return to her.

At last this long-expected youth had arrived, and no wonder his arrival should have caused a sensation in the higher circles of Creole society where the Duchess of Miranda ruled supreme.

At the ball that night, the first that had taken place in the magnificent residence since the Duke's death, were assembled the flower of the nobility and beauty of the island; and I was not surprised, therefore, that Lady Leigh had thought it necessary to create a sensation.

She well knew that her wondrous toilette, designed by Worth, which had just crossed the Atlantic, would stand in bold relief against the plain but faultless dresses of the Cuban ladies, who attired themselves in the simplest way possible, and that her dashing and lively American manners could not fail to cause an effect when compared with the elegant languor of the Cuban beauties.

She had set out from the hotel fully prepared for a conquest, and had determined to make one before returning. How well the consummate and well-practised coquette spread her meshes, we shall presently see.

When we arrived at the quinta it was already late, and the dancing had long begun to the languishing strains of the Spanish waltz, and the more exhilarating whirl of those of the magic Strauss.

The handsome Duchess, radiant in her state diamonds, and enveloped, as usual, in clouds of white tulle, stood at the entrance of the picture gallery receiving her guests. Around her hovered and fluttered half-a-dozen of the most superfine of gilded youth, to all appearance bent on most minutely describing the fluctuations of rapture and despair which perpetually filled what they were pleased to call their souls; in reality trying to win the tender heart of the fond mother of the young Duke whose friendship they most earnestly desired, for what purpose I will not venture to say.

Behind the Duchess, in a row of low rocking-chairs, sat half-a-dozen of her bosom friends, ladies of an uncertain age, who spent a very happy existence, living upon the fat of the land at the expense of their "dearest Rosa," as they called the Duchess, who in the bottom of their hearts they hated as such women generally do hate those from whom they receive favours, and on whom they are obliged to fawn as their "dearest friends." A few men stood beside these worthy and agreeable ladies, trying to amuse, or be amused, by them, for they knew the Duchess would be pleased to witness their devotion to her service, but wishing themselves in the ball-room all the time, instead of doing the amiable to the *demoiselles d'honneur*, as they styled the fair bevy who were ever in attendance on the great lady. After all, it was an easy penance, for often more amusement could be obtained from the caustic wit and vivid imagination of these, the business of whose whole life was to entertain and render themselves agreeable, than from hovering round some more beautiful, but also more proud and exacting beauty, who would have taken their devotion as her due.

Lilian, leaning on the arm of Mrs Herbert, after making their salutations to the mistress of the house, proceeded through the long picture gallery, into the ball-room, where I followed them, wishing myself all the time in my quiet little room at the San Carlos.

I danced the first waltz with her, after which she leant gracefully upon my arm, and asked me to promenade her about the room, entertaining me all the time with the pleasantest and the silliest small-talk *à propos de rien*—with now and then a word or two almost in earnest—*à propos* of quite another thing—but with her quick gazelle-like eyes intent all the time upon the young Duke, who, utterly dazzled and taken back by all these allurements, was making earnest inquiries as to who she was, and where she came from.

I could see through all her manœuvres plain enough, and I hated myself at the time for so blindly lending myself to such a shameless and transparent comedy.

At last General Herbert advanced towards us, and behind him came the Duke, blushing like a young maiden, but anxiously watching Lilian Leigh, who, still hanging gracefully upon my arm, pretended not to notice him.

The young Duke de Miranda was a fair-haired, fair-complexioned man of the average height, good looking, and a perfect gentleman undoubtedly, but who, had he not been a Duke and a Grandee, would have passed unnoticed in society. He had little of his handsome mother about him, excepting, perhaps, his eyes, which were true Cuban, almond-shaped, and which flashed behind the light eyelashes which veiled them like black diamonds set in gold.

"My dear Lady Leigh," said the General, stopping before us, "allow me to introduce to you the young Duke de Miranda, who is most desirous of the honour of dancing with you, and to celebrate whose arrival this ball is given. He has just returned from England, and it is useless for me to tell you that he speaks our language like a native,"

Lilian looked up, and as she gracefully bowed her fair head to the young nobleman, her eyes met his, she smiled and flushed. The smile was divine, it gave life to her beautiful features, the blush was—I think the young Duke, who at that moment ventured to touch the hand extended to him of this young, beautiful, blushing, and most accomplished coquette, could alone find the right words to describe it. For my part, I confess myself obliged to pass it by, as indescribable.

For one second they stood opposite each other in dumb confusion, while the General and I drew a few paces back. At last, the stereotyped words which follow every introduction throughout the world were pronounced between them—of course the weather, as usual, was asked to do duty on the occasion.

"Very warm, don't you think so?"

"No, not very, I rather like it warm."

"Do you indeed," he answered, taking courage from the most encouraging of smiles which she

again bestowed upon him. "I would never have thought it, but I am so glad you like warm weather."

"Ah! I am so glad you like me for liking warm weather, so glad you are glad."

It was with the greatest difficulty that the General and I managed to retain our countenance when we heard this sweet silly little speech.

Lilian Leigh noticed my badly restrained laughter, and after engaging herself for the next dance, she once more took my arm and said in a careless tone when he was out of sight—

"Rather an insignificant youngster that, is he not, Lord Carlton? How you must despise such youths, you who are so clever!"

These words made me more angry than ever with the bewitching widow, and their sweetness sounded most bitter to my ear. It was evident that she had not abandoned her determination of enslaving me, and that she still entertained hopes of achieving her conquest, although she had begun a new one which she evidently intended to carry on at the same time, flirting with both and playing us the one against the other.

That she felt no real affection for me was now more plain to me than ever, for if she had really loved me her conduct would certainly have altered after the night of the ball on board the Numancia, when she had distinctly seen by my determined manner that I would rather leave the Island altogether than make her a formal proposal.

But her conduct since that night convinced me but too plainly that her fears of the world's opinion had been a fiction, and invented on the spot in order to draw me on to make that proposal she so desired to hear. No allusion had passed between us to that conversation since it had occurred. We had met two days afterwards, and she had not even inquired why I had not left the Havana, as I had made up my mind to do on that night, in Mr Halsey's yacht, which sailed the next morning without me, but I was not surprised at this, for I had learned that very day that a free man, servant of the Count de Guanabacoa, had come to the hotel the morning after the ball to inquire if I had left.

I was therefore convinced that Lilian Leigh loved me not. I hardly know if I felt pleased or sorry at this discovery. I certainly was hurt at being liked only for my title and my money—for what man would not?—and yet I felt that I should now breathe with greater freedom since I knew that I was breaking no heart when I devoted myself entirely to my Conchita's love.

Lilian Leigh was but a flirt, a cold-hearted flirt, well practised in all the arts of coquetry, but the true essence of flirting is its unreality, however passionate it may at first sight appear. It is the most charming evanescent imitation of love, without the slightest tincture of truth in it on either side, for when real affection begins, flirtation ends.

That we all flirt, excepting only those miserable unlucky beings who never get a chance, and who pass their existence in vainly trying to do so, I cannot deny; but why we flirt is no mystery to any one; men at least do it, to pass their time agreeably and to indulge their vanity.

But the American young ladies have a strong reason for flirting; it is their way of getting a fortune or a husband, which is the same thing; exactly in the same way that their brothers acquire a fortune by gambling on the Stock Exchange, or speculating in Wall Street. And I hold the American ladies to be quite as expert and business-like in their branch of the art as their brothers are, although I will do them the justice to believe that they would not employ the coarse and foul means for achieving their conquests attributed to them by Sardon, and as he would have us believe, in his 'Uncle Sam.'

Shortly afterwards Lilian left me to keep her engagement with the Duke, with whom she remained for a good half hour after the waltz had ended. When she came back to Mrs Herbert, by whose side I was, she was full of news. The young duke had invited her to join his party on the morrow to the bull fight, and had begged her so hard that she had "been obliged to consent," but with the condition, that the invitation should include the General and his wife and—Me of all people!

"Me!" I exclaimed, "I hardly know him, and besides, if there is one thing I hate in the world, it is a bull fight."

"I will listen to no excuses, Lord Carlton, I have already promised that you will go." Then turning to Mrs Herbert she continued, "He is getting far too serious and melancholy, our sedate Englishman, we must try and amuse him a little or else he will die of *spleen*, like half his countrymen."

I could see that since the arrival of the only son of the handsome Duchess, the English were no longer to her, the noblest of men.

II.

"La trompe sonne, au taureau rugissant
La lance au poing, je déclare la guerre,
Ah ! qu 'il est beau dans sa démarche fière,
Frappant le sol, et de rage écumant !

"Entendez vous pour le toréador
Tous ces bravos d' enivrante allegresse,
Ils fonts bondir le cœur de ma maitresse
Ces cris joyeux, et de fête, et de mort.

"L'Havanaise gentille
Voilant sous sa mantille
Son bel œil noir qui brille
De tous les feux d'amour."

COMTE D'ADHEMAR.

THE next day we all proceeded in Mrs Herbert's carriage to the Plaza de Toros, an immense building of circular form, which certainly could entertain no pretensions whatever to architectural beauty.

It presented, however, a most striking, gay, and animated scene that afternoon, crowded as it was with the countless multitude which, like their ancestors, the Romans of old, had flocked to their favourite amusement of the arena.

It was Sunday, and the morning had consequently been spent by most of them in prayers and pious thoughts ; but they had one and all, ere this, forgotten the wholesome lessons of the

morning sermons, and their minds were now too much occupied with thoughts of blood and strife to recall the peaceful teachings of the Church.

When we arrived at the large gate, which looked, indeed, like the vomitorium of an ancient amphitheatre, we alighted from our carriage, and the name of the Duke de Miranda soon opened to us, like a *sesame,* that heavy iron door.

We ascended a narrow and badly lighted staircase, and all at once the whole scene burst on our sight—we beheld the immense ring filled with thousands of human beings, who were seated in rising circles around the vast arena—the countless groups following one below another in lessening and unbroken circles, bounding the very arena itself, from which the lowest tier was only elevated sufficiently to command a clear view of the spectacle, protected all around by a high barrier of painted wood.

The enclosed space where we were now standing was near the top of the building, and was where the private boxes are situated in the more perfect Plazas of Madrid and Seville. This enclosure, which was overhung by a small roof, supported by slender pillars, rising at equal distances from each other, and which preserved it from the scorching rays of the sun, had been set apart for the Duke and his party, so that in spite of the immense crowd we had no difficulty in obtaining comfortable seats.

The youthful Duke and his handsome mother were already there, as, indeed, were most of the guests invited by him. The Duchess, surrounded by her six inseparable companions, was seated in front, on the right side. The Countess of Guanabacoa, with three dark-haired young ladies, dressed in handsome Spanish dresses and white lace mantillas, occupied the centre seats, but the one on the extreme left remained still empty, and of this Lilian Leigh took possession, while Mrs Herbert sat on the other side, near the Duchess.

As I stood near the wooden frame which divided our enclosure from the next, leaning over Lilian's chair, I heard a sharp but melodious voice, which resounded like a silver trumpet in my ear, and which said with rather a nasal tone, in English, or rather in American,

"I guess I have seen you before, young gentleman."

I turned round as, indeed, did Lilian Leigh and the Countess, who could not but have heard these strange words, and what was my astonishment at discovering on the other side of the dividing barrier the belle of the steamer "City of Havana," Miss de Fison herself, seated quite close to me, and surrounded as usual by her devoted admirers.

Imagine to yourself a vivacious brunette, dressed in a costume of dark blue serge, with a shirt of blue and white striped linen, like a man's,

her slender throat encircled by a pale blue satin cravat; whilst around her flexible little waist was a belt, with immense steel knobs, in which was stuck a pocket revolver and a large knife, and from which hung a chatellaine of cut steel, from which were suspended, in glittering clusters, a fan two feet long, a purse, a double smelling bottle, a silver pencil-case, a pair of scissors, a set of tablets, an opera-glass, a pin-cushion, a looking-glass of polished steel, a watch, a piédometer, and God knows what besides. On her head, a broad-brimmed sailor's hat—jauntily set upon the innumerable curls which covered the whole head—was encircled by a blue satin ribbon, a pair of small hands, contained in yet smaller six-button gloves, *de peau de Suede*, were occupied in carrying a stick parasol of blue satin, four feet long, upon which she rested. Imagine all this, dear reader, and tell me who could be proof against allurements like these? Certainly not our youthful Duke, who coming suddenly to me, drew me aside, and whispered in my ear,

"Do you know that beautiful creature?"

"Yes," I answered; "she was our fellow-passenger on board the steamer coming from New York. She is a Miss de Fison, a great American belle, as you can see."

"I must know her," he exclaimed, in an excited voice, which badly concealed his emotion. "You must introduce me to her, Lord Carlton."

I was, of course, obliged to comply with this request, though it cost me more than one angry look from Lilian Leigh.

"Miss de Fison," I said, "will you allow me to introduce to you a friend of mine . . . "

I had no time to say his name, for she interrupted me at once, by exclaiming—

"Glad to make his acquaintance. Does he talk any civilised language?" Then she added, as a further explanation to her words, "I mean, does he talk French or English?"

"Oh yes, indeed," burst out the Duke, "I do talk English; I have been in England."

"Ah! you have been to the British Isles to learn English. I would have advised your mother to have sent you to the States in preference; it would have been cheaper, and they would have given you a fair amount of h's."

Lilian Leigh and I looked at each other when we heard these strange remarks, and we could not help smiling, for we both felt sure that our young Duke had never been thus addressed before in his life.

He, however, thought it most delightful, and so he sallied out of our box, with the intention of going into the one occupied by the dashing belle, so as to be able to talk to her in a lower tone of voice, and one not so audible all over the two divisions.

While he was going round, and was out of

hearing, Miss de Fison asked me who he was.

"Who is that young chap? He is not up to much, I reckon."

"He is the young Duke de Miranda, a Grandee of Spain, and perhaps the richest man in the island at this moment; that handsome lady in the far corner is his mother."

"My! you don't say so?" she exclaimed; "and I was going to snub him! and perhaps he has skedaddled."

"Oh dear me, no! he seems delighted with you. See, he is at this moment opening the door of your box."

"Father!" she shouted, to Mr de Fison, who was sitting at the back of the box, smoking a cigar, "Open the door to the great grandee!"

Mr de Fison looked up in utter amazement at these words; but as, fortunately, he was well used to obey the strange commands of his charming daughter, he got up and opened the door, upon which the son of the handsome Duchess made his appearance in the enemies' box.

At a peremptory sign from Miss de Fison, her young admirers retired to the other side, and she was left alone in the centre of the enclosure, with her tiny little feet resting upon a low chair in front of her, on which the Duke set himself at her command, for she said in a patronising tone.

"There, make yourself comfortable, and don't move about or make tracks any more."

I need not say that every eye around us was fixed upon the young couple, but although they seemed to talk most earnestly, all our endeavours to hear what they said proved fruitless, and all we were able to discover was, that he blushed more and more, and that she became more and more animated every second. Her bright speaking eyes flashing now and then as she turned them our way, and her little hands moving to and fro, we concluded words had become already too feeble a vehicle for her ideas.

But now the bloody spectacle we had come to witness was about to commence in the arena below, and all eyes in the immense amphitheatre were turned towards it, excepting those of Lilian Leigh, and of the three young Cuban ladies in the Spanish mantillas, which still remained fixed upon Miss de Fison and the Duke.

The brass band now burst out in loud martial strains, and the procession of the combatants advanced in the most formal order towards the box of the Captain-General. The *Picadores* came first, each bearing in his hand the long lance from which they derive their name, and from which, following the ancient laws of the ring, the bull must receive the first wound.

They were dressed almost as in Spain, with very little difference. One of these consisted in

enormous Panama hats to preserve them from the sun, and another in formidable spurs, which seemed long and sharp enough to cause a gallop under the very ribs of death. The *chuleros* and the *banderilleros* came next, followed by the *matadores*, and behind them all, the teams of gaily-harnessed mules, used for dragging away the slaughtered bull, which closed the procession.

When they reached the centre of the arena they all bowed low before the boxes of the Governor-General, and Mayor of the town, from whose box was then thrown the key of the "*Toril*," where the bulls had been placed the night before. This ceremony concluded, the gay procession then dispersed, and all prepared themselves for action, excepting, of course, the teams of mules, with their numerous attendants, which withdrew till required to perform their office, and the *matadores*, who only make their appearance at the critical moment of the day's drama, to give the *coup de grâce*.

During this brief interval of preparation, the whole assemblage was hushed into the deepest silence, and excepting the young Duke and Miss de Fison who paid no attention to the proceedings whatever, but still continued talking in a low whisper, no one spoke to his neighbour, so spellbound they all were by the impressiveness of the moment.

The immense gates were now thrown wide open, and the bull rushed out from his prison at

full speed, while the multitude hailed his appearance with shouts and cries, which seemed to make the building shake to its very foundation.

His first rush was towards the *chulos*, who ran before him with all the agility of men who held their lives by the speed of their feet, waving their large red cloaks and performing many a turn with the view of eluding their pursuer.

The *picadores* now galloped to their rescue, and the infuriated animal turned his fine handsome head towards them, and flew across the arena after them.

The *chulos* thus liberated, and all the other men on foot, jumped the barrier, but the poor horses could not accomplish this feat, and one of them consequently fell a victim to the bull's rage, who thrust his horns into him in spite of the long lance of the *picador*, which penetrated deep into his back.

The horse fell dead close to the barricade, and while the bull's attention was called another way, the wounded rider was taken down from the immense saddle which now lay on the ground; it was with the greatest difficulty that he was able to walk, so heavily were his legs covered with the steel plates, which are necessary precautions, as no human legs could escape unscathed the blows and contusions to which they are continually exposed.

I was obliged to turn my eyes from the agonies

of the dying horse, which made me shudder, but I noticed, with still greater horror, that some of the ladies present looked upon the poor animal with a curious, rather than a pitying look, while a smile played over their faces.

"Ah! I thought to myself, these fair and innocent looking women will yet have to undergo many earthly incarnations before they become elevated spirits, and conquer their lower animal passions."

A cry of horror now burst from the assembly and rose on the air; the bull had caught a man between his horns and was tossing him in his mad fury. Mrs Herbert, near whom I was standing, turned very pale, and every moment I thought she would have fainted. Lilian Leigh arose and said she could see no more, it was too horrible!

But new shouts, and this time shouts of fear and alarm, rang through the amphitheatre. The bull (who had just received the first pair of darts from a young *banderillero*, who seemed to make sport of the imminent danger that attended his footsteps,) had suddenly, in the extremity of his pain, jumped the barrier, and was galloping over the benches, from which the crowd had flown in the greatest disorder at his sudden approach; some leaping into the arena, and others mounting up the rows of seats above them.

Lilian Leigh gave a wild scream, and fainted into my arms.

I saw no more, for I was obliged to get her out of the Plaza as soon as possible, and I was certainly not sorry for it, for I was too horrified with the whole spectacle to have remained much longer.

III.

"Praying all I can,
If prayers will not hush thee,
Airy Lilian,
Like a rose-leaf I will crush thee,
Fairy Lilian."

TENNYSON.

THE drive in the open carriage through the long and handsome avenue of trees which, for more than three miles, fringes the walls of the town forming the Paseos de Tacon, and of Isabel II., soon calmed the nerves of the fair widow, and the fresh breeze from the neighbouring sea revived her spirits.

"Horrible, horrible sight; shall I ever forget it! Surely, Lord Carlton, you do not enjoy such spectacles?"

"You forget, Lady Leigh," I said, "that it was you who made me come. I know from experience what bull fights are, for I have witnessed several in Spain, and have always left the amphitheatre with he firm resolution of never entering it again."

"I had never seen one before, and had no idea what it was like; poor dear George used to tell me that they were great fun, but then he was so

fond of all kinds of sport! And after all, I do not think it was the sight of the blood alone that made me ill, it was mostly that detestable American girl whose strange conduct so shocked us all. Fancy her presuming to flirt with the Duke, and the coarse vulgar way in which she began to talk to him. That certainly was enough to make the bravest woman faint. Where can she have been educated!"

"I must say, dear Lady Leigh, that I certainly fail to see why you should classify Miss de Fison's manners as coarse and vulgar. It is only the American style, to which I am sure you must be accustomed."

"It may be the Yankee style, but certainly not the style to which I have been accustomed. Do me the justice, Lord Carlton, of confessing that I at least have been brought up in a very different manner."

"Who doubts it for a moment? Surely I should be the first to take you as a model of everything that is elegant and *comme il faut*, but you should pity, rather than condemn those whose breeding is not so refined and so high as your own."

Shortly after this we reached the hotel, where Professor Farren met us at the door, and was most anxious to know what had happened.

It had been arranged that in the evening we should go to the Opera to hear Madame Lucca in the "Favorita," so I determined to put in an appearance, if only for a few seconds.

The theatre of Tacon is situated, as I think I have before stated, outside the walls of the old town, in the handsome promenade of the same name, and was built by the justly celebrated governor, General Tacon.

It is a large and beautiful house, and might rival the best in Europe. It has, however, the great peculiarity of being very open; and the front of the boxes, which are only divided from each other to the height of about four feet, is formed of a rich trellis-work of gilt metal, so that the ladies who occupy them can be seen at full length; and often the unmanageable dress of some coquettish beauty displays to the audience in the stalls all the perfections of a delicate ancle and a little white satin shoe.

There are three rows of boxes, the state box of the mayor being in the centre under the dress circle. The Captain General or Governor, has also a large and handsome box in the pit tier, which as corresponding to a royal box, is decorated with the Castles and Lions of Spain. By the side of the proscenium there are on either side a perpendicular row of boxes which are completely hidden from the rest of the house by gilt trellised blinds, and which are occupied by persons in mourning, or those who do not care to be seen in public. The uppermost gallery is set apart for people of colour, the men on one side, and the women on the other. There is a dress circle, as I have said before,

over the mayor's box, where foreign ladies can go; for the boxes are all let for the season, and can seldom be had for a night; and the stalls are only occupied by gentlemen, who all dress in the Cuban full dress, which consists of either a white or black pantaloon, according to the season, with black dress-coat and waistcoat.

In one of these stalls I took my seat, and was not a little surprised when I saw Miss de Fison in a pale green tulle dress, covered with white azelias, in one of the pit boxes near the stage. As I bowed to her I could not help pitying the feelings of our poor Lilian Leigh when she should see her rival thus gorgeously and becomingly attired in a place where she had made sure at least not to have been surpassed by any one.

Towards the middle of the first act, when Tamberlick and Lucca were singing their beautiful duo, she made her appearance in a grand tier box with the Duchess de Miranda, who on this occasion was only accompanied by two of her numerous lady attendants, one of them being the Doña Eulalia, who had been with her when on her visit to the Ingenio de la Azucena. Lilian Leigh was looking, of course, splendid; and one would have thought that these two American belles had been adorning themselves and practising their powers of fascination to endeavour to outvie each other.

The Countess de Guanabacoa, with the three

handsome dark-eyed girls who had been with her at the bull-fight in the afternoon, were in another box.

I naturally wondered to which of these three boxes the young Duke would repair when he made his appearance, but he arrived not, and at the end of the act, I went up to pay my respects to the Duchess, and to inquire how she felt after the excitement of the day.

"Bull-fights never excite me," she said, "I am so accustomed to them!"

"But do you like them?" asked Lilian Leigh.

"Well, yes, they are rather amusing sometimes."

"I am sure what is not in the least amusing," interposed one of the lady companions, "is to see that horrible American girl, who this morning was dressed almost as a man, talking and flirting as she does with our young Duke."

Lilian Leigh cast a look as if of thanks to the lady, who acknowledged it with a smile, and then continued—

"But the Duchess is so good; she will never see these things; everybody is perfect to her."

"I cannot imagine, my dear Eduarda," said the Duchess in her good-natured way, "what shocks you so much in that poor little American; as for her dress I rather liked it, and I will certainly have a skirt made like hers as soon as possible; it is evidently the fashion."

"And you too intend to appear in man's attire!" exclaimed the middle-aged lady. "Jesus Maria!* what are we coming to," and she devoutly crossed herself.

"She actually wore pistols and knives in her belt!" said the other companion. "If you would but take my advice, Rosa, you would immediately command your son never to speak to her again, the impudent creature!"

"Why will you not let me alone? am I not to be allowed a moment's peace? must I be worried and teased until I do what I know is not right? You all seem bent on hating that poor girl—why I cannot imagine, but I will not lend myself to any of your intrigues, for even if I said something to my son about it, don't you see that it would be the very way to make him seek her society all the more!"

"But the manners of that girl are outrageous and vulgar, she created quite a scandal in the Plaza this afternoon. I do not know what the Countess and those charming *señoritas* she brought with her must have thought."

This was said by Lilian Leigh, who was too much interested in the affair to let it drop, but the poor Duchess, who hated all worry and trouble, and was constantly teased by her inseparable companions, who loved her so much that they would not allow her to have her own way in anything,

* An ejaculation much used by Spaniards.

turned to me, who until now had remained a silent listener to the little quarrel, and asked what I thought of the girl and her strange manners, for strange she was obliged to admit them to be.

"Without expressing any approval of American manners and customs," I said, "I see no reason whatever why they should be condemned solely because they do not assimilate with Cuban or with English manners and customs, which are certainly in many respects susceptible of improvement."

"Again I beg of you, Lord Carlton, not to call them 'American manners,'" said Lilian, "they are no more American than Chinese. Good society is the same all over the world, and those who behave contrary to its recognised rules cannot certainly pretend to belong to it."

As I turned my eyes towards the opposite side of the house I saw the young Duke, in the Countess de Guanabacoa's box, seated with the three beauties who had worn the Spanish mantillas in the morning, talking and laughing with them. I called the attention of my companions to this fact.

The two attendant ladies burst out at once, "It was really shocking of the Countess to impose her three nieces or protegées upon the young Duke!" "It was scandalous." "It was unheard of."

"There you go," exclaimed the Duchess, fanning herself violently with her large fan; "a moment ago it was the American girl, now it is

the nieces of the Countess. Why can you not leave my son alone? why should he not flirt with whom he likes? If I had known all this beforehand, I can tell you Eulalia, and you too Eduarda, that I would never have brought him back from Europe; at least, *there* he was safe from your wicked thoughts."

The two ladies, who saw that their patroness was really getting angry in earnest, stopped for a while, but presently the Duke passed from the Countess's box to that of Miss de Fison. This was too much, and they both began again to criticise his movements.

"If you do not stop at once," exclaimed the Duchess, "I leave the theatre; the curtain is going up; let me enjoy the opera in peace."

Doña Eulalia and Doña Eduarda, who now perceived that they had gone too far, and that they had fallen into disgrace, began to sob, and to hold their handkerchiefs to their eyes.

"Oh! it is hard not to be understood by one's best friend, who will take as an offence what is really a true kindness!" said Doña Eulalia.

"It is hard to be dependent upon people who have no heart!" sighed Doña Eduarda.

"No consideration for other people's feelings," sobbed the one.

"One is expected, I suppose, to be pleased with everything," muttered the other.

"For those who are born to it, it should come

easy enough, but for me who was brought up in a fashionable convent and was the daughter of a Colonel! . . . . . " said the first.

"Madam, do you mean anything by those insinuations, for if you do I can let every one in this theatre know that I am as well born as most people, and that my love for the dear Duchess is free from all selfishness, which is more than I can say for some people," exclaimed the other.

I do not know how this quarrel would have ended, if it had not been for the Duchess, who, I presume, was well used to scenes of the kind, and who, fortunately, put an end to it by pressing the hands of the two fair disputants and whispering something in the ear of each, which changed their anger, as if by magic, into wreathed smiles.

Shortly after this I left the box and the house, but my last look revealed to me the young Duke still in Miss de Fison's box, flirting desperately with her in complete ignorance of all that was going on in his mother's box; and Lilian Leigh, who with anxious eyes watched all their movements, and was so intent upon them, that she allowed me to depart in peace to my hotel, as the curtain was rising over the king of Castille's gorgeous palace.

NIGHT THE NINTH.

—o—

"Such be the sons of Spain, and strange her fate!
They fight for freedom who were never free;
A kingless people for a nerveless state,
Her vassals combat when their chieftains flee,
True to the veriest slaves of treachery;
Fond of a land that gave them nought but life,
Pride points the path that leads to liberty,
Back to the struggle, baffled in the strife,
War, war is still the cry, 'war even to the knife.'"

LORD BYRON.

I.

> "Before decay thy body wears,
> And with it strength and beauty bears,
> Before disease, stern charioteer,
> Thy frame's dissolver, death, brings near,
> Those noblest treasures hoard in haste,
> Which neither time nor chance can waste.
> With ceaseless care amass that wealth
> Which neither thieves can filch by stealth,
> Nor greedy tyrants snatch away,
> Which even in death shall with thee stay."
>
> THE MAHABHARATA.

ONCE more I stood on my balcony, side by side with my spirit bride.

Walter. "You see, my Conchita, that I am faithful to you in spite of all the allurements of society, which would fain draw me away from your side. Last night it was early morning before I returned from the ball at the Cerro, and to-night it is already late, although I left the theatre at the end of the first act."

Conchita. "I know, dearest Walter, I know all that; for I am always with you, always by your side to protect you from the perils that surround you, and ready to help you to overcome the temptations of the world."

Walter. "You must then know all about

Lilian Leigh, and Miss de Fison, and the young Duke; what is your opinion of them all? and who do you think he will marry?"

Conchita. "Of what use would my opinion of them be to you? they are not of our sphere, they belong to a world apart from ours. The Duke I believe to be superior to most young men of the day, still he is very much spoiled by the unbounded admiration and flattery he receives from everyone. His position, which, from a worldly point of view, would no doubt be considered a most advantageous one, and one most to be desired, is, in reality, a state of extreme probation—a position full of trials and temptations; for to whom much is given, as I have before told you, much is expected, and a free spirit possessing any amount of foresight would think twice before undertaking such an earthly existence."

Walter. "Is it possible?"

Conchita. "Yes; you only see what is around you, the daily events that take place in the small circle where you at present live and have your being; but we free spirits see beyond the earth, and take earthly existences for what they really are—mere seminaries where we come, as the child goes to school, to study and learn and prepare for the real life which comes after, and which is that led by the pure spirits in heaven. If you can accustom yourself to think of this life as of a merely temporary school-room, and of all its joys

and sorrows as of lessons which must be learned in order to attain the higher grades of scholarships, you will find how unimportant and how trivial are the pleasures of a time.

"It is only to spirits such as Lilian Leigh and Miss de Fison, who are ignorant of any higher purpose in life, and whose only ambition is to be happy and great in this world, that the events of a day can be of much consequence. They are both experienced flirts, and are both staking high to win the affections of the young Duke. I suppose it will end by his falling a victim to one of them, and making her his Duchess, which is what they both desire; as for the man, you can see for yourself that they are both too intent on their purpose to think of him, or to entertain any real affection for him, and so they do not care though they lose his esteem, if they only succeed in winning his hand.

"I am glad, dear Walter, that you, at least, are free, for the moment, from their wiles. You can now see the real value of the love Lilian Leigh has for you when she can thus suddenly transfer her affections. I suppose she thinks that as she cannot have the Lord she will have the Duke! You can imagine that the exchange will not be very painful to her if she succeeds in winning a ducal coronet; if not, if Miss de Fison or any other win the day, or if the Duke prove wiser than we imagine him to be,

and refuses to bite at any of the numerous lines and baits set to catch him, then, most likely, Lilian Leigh will return to you, and try again for the English Lord.

"But enough of this for to-night; I want to continue the history of our past in which you take such an interest."

Walter. "Ah, yes! my angel wife, I am most anxious to know all that past of ours. It contains for me a meaning deeper than even you can imagine, and which I will tell you some day. It also shows me how trivial and unimportant after all, are the joys of which we are wont to think so much while on earth, and how every event pales with the course of time.

"The past! the past! That was indeed an eventful life you narrated to me last night, my beloved Conchita. What are Lilian Leigh and Miss de Fison compared with Mariamne and Mary Magdalene! or even with Miriam! for you, too, dearest, were deserving of much praise during those painful and eventful trials your spirit had to undergo. But I hardly know which to admire most, the genuine repentance of Mariamne, the beautiful Jewess who loved me so well, or the holy and noble character of her who has since become one of God's saints, and who so generously sacrificed her own happiness to that of her Roman rival."

Conchita. "Saint Mary Magdalene, to give her

her well-deserved title, was indeed a great woman, and proved herself as great in holiness as she had been great in sin; but then you must remember that she was a much higher, or rather I should say, a more advanced spirit than any of the others, and so notwithstanding her sanguine temperament, she was able to devote herself to a life of austerity and privation; and this she firmly persevered in to the last, living always in a heaven of her own making even while on this earth; which occasioned her pure existence, particularly after her retirement into the wilderness, to flow away in a dream of beatitude, enjoying pleasures which no reality could ever have conferred, and fully illustrating the words of her beloved master, to the effect that the kingdom of Heaven he had so much preached about, is within us—and is therefore a state and not a locality."

Walter. "You are right, my Conchita. Heaven is only to be found in our own hearts; but for that how pure, how holy, and saint-like must those hearts and our lives be! But pray continue our past history through the ages."

Conchita. "I will try to do so, my Walter, as well as my memory will allow me, though, perhaps, I shall find it necessary, in order to do so fully, to take a voyage to the distant regions of the Milky Way, from whence, as I have told you, I can once more behold the events of our past lives, as they are carried through universal space

by the rays of light which proceed from the earth at the time of their occurrence. For as I have explained to you already, God writes our history in the heavens with letters made by suns which nothing can blot out or extinguish.

II.

> "And now I will unclasp a secret book,
> And, to your quick-conceiving discontent,
> I'll read you matter deep and dangerous."
>
> HENRY IV., PART 1.

"SEVEN centuries later, and in the year 626 after the birth of Christ, I was born in the beautiful city which now bears the name of Seville, and in which we first met during our last earthly existence. For in the same town where we first began to love each other, in the life I am now about to relate, we were, twelve centuries later, to meet again and become one for evermore.

The ancient city of Seville was a very different town from the Seville you now know, but scarcely less beautiful, and, in comparison, infinitely more powerful and important. It was the great Hispal of the Phœnicians, the redoubtable Hispalis of the Romans, and later on, the magnificent Ishbilliah of the Moors. It rapidly rose to splendid prosperity, and contained nearly 500,000 inhabitants, a grandeur which was scarcely eclipsed when, as the capital of the immense empire of Charles V., the riches of two worlds poured in on all sides, and made

it the magnificent Seville of the sixteenth century.

"In the seventh century, however, it was only one of the principal strongholds of the Gothic monarchy of the Spanish Visi-Goths, and the capital of Southern Spain; and had been rendered famous of late by the notable Church Councils of 590 and 619.

"I was born of a noble family, bigotedly and intolerantly attached to the ancient faith of the Arians, which had been the original religion of the Gothic race, but which, since the third council of Toledo, in the reign of Don Recaredo, had fallen into disgrace, and had been declared by all the subsequent kings an heretical faith.

"My father—a direct descendant from Eurico, the great Gothic chieftain, who conquered Toledo from the Romans in 467, and finally expelled them from the country—had died just before my birth, so that I never knew him, the entire family consisting, at that time, of Fruela, a brother several years my senior, and Theodolinda, my devoted mother.

"These were the dramatis-personæ of the tragic events I am going to relate to you; and as when about to witness a play, one likes to know the names of the actors who are going to take part in it, I think it as well to tell you in the beginning who we all were at the time.

"Count Fruela, the proud head of our family, was the same noble spirit whom, in the last existence you have known as Martinian, and who at the present moment is our darling child, the earthly fruit of our love, Raphael Carlton.

"I was Berenguela,* his sister, who, according to the young esquires of Don Fruela, and to the gallant knights of Seville and Toledo, but still more in her own opinion, was possessed of irresistible charms.

"The Countess Theodolinda was then, as she has subsequently been in my last earthly incarnation, my devoted, all-indulgent mother. This is the first time I make mention of her in this history of our lives, but do not think she was a stranger to me if until then unknown to you, for we had been intimately connected in the past, and repeatedly drawn towards one another in the lives which had preceded that one in Central India, of which I have already spoken, and during which we were first connected upon the earth.

"You, too, my dear Walter, lived then, and were attracted from your earliest youth to your Conchita, for it was during that life that we first began to love one another, although with a very feeble and selfish passion, for in those days we had not yet arrived at the advanced stage at which love means unbounded sympathy and entire self-devotion. We were still in that primitive

* Pronounced *Berenqhela.*

stage in which attraction is mechanical rather than mental, and of body rather than of soul. Yet it was the basis of love, the foundation-stone, so to speak, of our eternal union, rather than the real love which could only come later, when we were both more advanced in the scale of being. You were then the Prince Recesvinto, son of the worthy old King Flavio Quindasvinto, who, since the death of the youthful Fulga, was King of the Visi-Goths of Spain, and sovereign master of almost the entire peninsula.

"After this necessary explanation, I think I can begin the history of that life which, if you take into account the rude nature of the times, and the coarse, half-savage state of the people, who were yet in a very low stage of material existence, both morally and intellectually, I am sure you will not expect to be one of great deeds, nor of famous acts of self-devotion."

III.

> "A maiden knight—to me is given,
> Such hope, I know not fear;
> I yearn to breathe the airs of heaven
> That often meet me here.
>
> I muse on joy that will not cease,
> Pure spaces clothed in living beams,
> Pure lilies of eternal peace,
> Whose odours haunt my dreams."
>
> TENNYSON.

"I NEED not dwell upon the first years of that existence, which were of course uninteresting and monotonous, as the years of childhood always are, for as I have often told you, we must learn how to use our new organs before we can fully employ them, and are once more fit to continue our career of eternal progress.

My first experiences were those of the love of a fond and beautiful mother, and of stern religious directors; for the peaceful doctrines of the meek and loving Jesus had already been interpreted in a hundred different ways, and had given rise to prolonged controversies and wars, so that the continual persecutions and bloodshed had rendered his followers bigoted and intolerant in their turn.

"The society in which I was brought up was also characterised by that intermediate state of

manners which exhibits all the vices of civilisation without any of the virtues of barbarism, and no exterior polish varnished over the roughness of the Gothic feudal Counts, whose conduct was rendered only more conspicuously offensive, by an affectation of sanctity, and a scrupulous attention to all the external forms of religion.

My mother was a devout Arian, and had been brought up in horror and hatred of the accursed errors of the Tritheists and Consubstantialists whom she had been taught to look upon as heretics. No wonder, then, that she in her turn should bring me up in an equally wholesome detestation of those doctrines to which already the court and the people had bowed in complete obedience, leaving only a few scattered nobles to pursue the old religion of the race. Our ancestors had held Arianism not only as their saving faith, but particularly as the great distinctive between them and the Spanish and Roman population which they had subjected to their rule after long and bloody struggles. A perfect crowd of priests was consequently attached to these few Counts who still patronised the disciples of Arius, and our house was completely invaded by such men, to whose care the education of the children was confided. Under these circumstances, and with such associations, I was brought up as a fervent believer in the doctrines of the great reformer, and both my brother and I would have

been ready to sacrifice everything to defend our faith against that of the Catholics.

We lived in an old castle on the banks of the smiling Gaudalquivir, or Bœtis, as it was then called, which had been for long years a stronghold of the Romans, and I even believe before them, of the Phœnicians. It was a grand old place, flanked by many a noble tower, and surrounded by deep trenches and high battlements. Our life was a monotonous existence, for since the final expulsion of the Romans and Suevians, peace had reigned almost uninterruptedly in Southern Spain; but peace was now fast counteracting the virtues which war had developed in the noble race of the Visi-Goths, while it disclosed at the same time the weaknesses and vices of their semi-civilized state.

Petty wars of course went on almost daily between the different Counts who governed the land, and exercised almost unbounded dominion over the people; but my brother, during his youth, had spent his time and chiefly employed his men in chasing the wild boars, and in waging war against the brute creation in general; and when he grew up into a man and a warrior, he swore that he would not waste his time and strength in petty warfare with more or less courteous neighbours, but that he would aspire to something greater and more worthy of the ambition of a nobleman and a Goth.

All this time I had grown up by the side of the

loving woman to whom I owed my life; and had led a peaceful, quiet existence, employing the greater part of my time in religious devotions, and in working tapestry with my young companions and ladies; for we lived in almost royal style, and kept a regular staff of dependants and followers, whose families for many generations had been attached to ours.

One day, however, a great event was announced in the Castle. Prince Recesvinto, the king's eldest son, was coming to Seville, and requested our hospitality during his stay in that city. This was indeed great news for us, who since my father's death had lived almost apart from the rest of the world, and great preparations were consequently made to receive the royal guest. This happened when I was seventeen years of age and my brother twenty-four, so that it was only natural we should both feel most excited at the arrival of a young prince, who was himself of an age between ours, and therefore a fit companion for both.

In due course of time Recesvinto arrived, and then I first learnt that a union between us had been talked of, and that this was the chief reason for his visit. I could not but be well pleased at this, for it was impossible not to admire his bold, noble character, his handsome features and manly form, and the first time I saw him, something in my heart told me that we were not strangers, that a sympathetic tie, which I

could not explain, but which was not the less real, drew us to one another, and I deemed myself fortunate that the husband to whom I had been betrothed without ever having seen him, should prove to be one whom I would myself have selected as the object of my affections.

I can hardly tell if he had the same thoughts as I had, but he seemed well pleased with his intended bride, and often pressed me to his warm heart, whispering sweet words of love, which fell on my ear, like the evening dew falls upon the lily. We passed long hours sitting side by side upon the battlements, watching the stately galleys as they gently glided down the river on their way to Constantinople or Alexandria, or rambling through the neighbouring woods—I leaning on his arm, while he related to me the ancient legends of our warlike race, varied sometimes by his own adventures, and the perils he had run in the chase. Those were indeed happy days, and I can only compare them to those still happier ones which we spent side by side on the beautiful shores of Loch Lomond and Loch Katrine, in my last earth-life.

My brother, too, loved the young prince, for he also felt that they were not strangers to each other, although they had never met before in that existence. Still I could not help fearing that envy, or something not unlike it, cooled sometimes his affection for him, and that he viewed with a

certain amount of anger a youth who, although possessor of no unusual virtues or superior wisdom, should by his birth occupy a position so much higher than his own. But we all knew that Recesvinto, although the eldest son of the king, was not the heir apparent to the crown, for in the Gothic monarchy, the principle of hereditary succession had not as yet been recognised, although sons had often succeeded to their fathers on the throne of the Spanish Visi-Goths.

So the time passed quickly over our heads, while the banquets and feasts of the evening succeeded to the sports and hunting excursions of the day; but at last the time fixed for the prince's departure arrived, and he was obliged to leave us, to return once more to the brilliant court of his father at Toledo, where he had been summoned by a royal messenger."

IV.

> "I have seen tempests, when the scolding winds
> Have rived the knotty oaks; and I have seen
> The ambitious ocean swell, and rage, and foam,
> To be exalted with the threat'ning clouds;
> But never till to-night, never till now,
> Did I go through a tempest dropping fire.
> Either there is a civil strife in heaven,
> Or else the world, too saucy with the gods,
> Incenses them to send destruction."
>
> SHAKSPEARE.

"WE felt very lonely, as you may imagine, after Recesvinto's departure; and our life became once more the monotonous routine it had been before his visit. I shall leave, therefore, the inhabitants of the stately castle by the Guadalquivir to their several occupations, and a spirit's power of ubiquity shall transport me in an instant to the steep and rugged crags of the mountains of Toledo, where the Prince, with his small retinue, had by this time arrived, after a long journey of several days over the desert plains of la Mancha, since rendered so famous by the unequalled and unparalleled adventures of the bravest of knights—Don Quixote.

They were wending their way along the scarcely discernible track which crossed the mountains,

slowly and with no unnecessary care, for the steep precipices on one side, and the perpendicular rocks which rose to an inaccessible height on the other, rendered their progress one of unusual difficulty and even danger. As they proceeded over ravines and crags which, at every moment, threatened either to bury them alive in the quagmires produced by the ruins of ages, or precipitate them headlong into the abyss below; the heavy leaden-coloured thunder clouds which had rolled majestically over the mountain since the early morning, suddenly burst, coming down upon our travellers in torrents of rain, the force of which they could hardly resist; deafening claps of thunder rolled over their heads, while now and then bright flashes of lightning dazzled their eyes and frightened their horses.

The violence of the tempest became greater and greater every moment, and the branches of the wild shrubs, which here and there grew amongst the rocks, were bent, broken, and tossed in every direction by the wind, which now blew a perfect hurricane; they heard under the very hoofs of their horses the continuous thunder of the torrent which dashed from crag to crag into the deep ravine below, like a perfect cataract. Darkness covered the landscape, for it was already late, and besides this, no rays of moon or star could have traversed the dense clouds which hung 'twixt earth and sky.

Recesvinto, who prided himself on his personal strength and power of endurance, and who had never courted any amusements but those of the hunting-field and the chase, thought but lightly of the dangers of the storm ; not so, however, his companions who, perhaps more superstitious than brave, attached to this sudden storm a meaning, and hinted at concealed witches and wicked spirits.

"By the Holy Trinity, I am not afraid," exclaimed the prince, in a blunt manner. "I dare everything with my battle-axe by my side, and this holy cross hanging from my neck ; you remain here by these rocks, which will shelter you from the wind, and let me go on in front and explore the road."

Without waiting for an answer, he spurred his thorough-bred Arab and was soon lost in the darkness that overspread the mountain.

His frightened companions saw no more of him. The storm lasted the whole night, and only with the first rays of the early morn did its fury abate, and the Goths emerging from the cave where they had been hidden all through the long hours of its duration, begin to look everywhere for their prince, but he was nowhere to be seen ; they searched every crag and cave, they climbed the mountains and descended to the bottom of the abyss, but he was not to be found ; and at last, after a whole day's useless search, they once more

continued their journey towards Toledo, but this time without the prince they had sworn to guard, and in the most anxious state of mind as to the reception they would get from the king when he saw them return to the capital without his beloved son.

V.

"Splendid realms of old romance,
Spain, thy tower-crown'd crest advance,
Grasp the shield, and couch the lance.

"Lusitania, from the dust,
Shake thy locks, thy cause is just;
Strike for freedom, strike and trust."

MONTGOMERY.

WE shall now follow the brave prince and watch him as he spurs his horse and makes him leap from rock to rock, careless of all danger. Hark, hark! deep sounds the thunder in the air, and the noble animal, with his nostrils expanded, draws lightning out of the very stones which he hardly seems to touch, as he flies up the mountain's side. Up, up, they go from crag to crag, climbing the virgin rock, which since creation, eagles alone had dared to scale, but the wind blows, and trees and stones before it fly, and in scattered masses roll headlong into the precipice below; the very rocks quiver, and the clouds, black as night, roll over the mountains, but Recesvinto is brave, and with the unfailing courage of his noble race, he heeds not the up-rooted trees and prostrate pines, but passes on, and in a few minutes more he has attained the mountain's brow, where the tempest

has not yet reached, and is able from this dizzy height to be a spectator of the drama which nature is acting below—thankful to be no longer taking a part in it, but still not an indifferent eye-witness —so awful the storm seemed even from here.

In a natural cave, untrod before by human foot, he finds shelter and rest; and, heedless of his isolated situation, as he had been reckless of the dangers of the storm, he falls asleep upon a stony couch, and dreams in happy peace of his beloved Berenguela, and of the glorious future which awaits him.

But he has not been long in that lonely grotto before a party of men, half shepherds, half bandits, pursued like him by the tempest, enter its secluded shelter, and awake him from his slumbers.

He rises with a start, and while the innate sense of self-preservation makes him instinctively seize his battle-axe in one hand, the other seeks involuntarily the small iron cross which hangs from his neck.

"Bandits! villains! who are you?"

No answer is given to this insulting question, but a hundred arms secure him, and a stout cord soon binds him and makes him incapable of resistance. Then, and only then, one of the party speaks, —a wild-looking man, whose appearance would seem to indicate that his life had been spent in scaling mountains and robbing stray travellers, clothed in skins and furs, but wearing, like the prince, the

symbol of Christianity round his neck, surrounded by the holy names of the blessed Trinity.

"A Goth! one of the accursed tyrants of our land, whose yoke of iron is harder to bear than even that of Rome! We have him, comrades, sons of Viriato; what shall we do with him? The holy Trinity places him in our power."

"Let him die," were the words which came from every mouth around him.

"I am a Christian, a Catholic like yourselves," exclaimed Recesvinto, prompted more by pride than by fear. "See around my neck hangs the symbol of our salvation. You would not kill one of your brethren?"

"You are none of ours," said the fierce-looking man who had first spoken. "You are a Goth, we are Spaniards; you are an Arian, we are Catholics. It is indeed a cross which hangs from thy neck, but it does not bear the names of the holy Trinity."

"Do you not believe my word? I am a Catholic I tell you all, and I would not lie, even to save my life; if this cross bear not the distinctive marks of the Catholic Church, it is because it was made long before the creed of the accursed Arians was known, and has been ever since in my family. I am Recesvinto; would ye kill the son of your king?"

"Recesvinto! the son of the tyrant! Let us kill him at once," was shouted on all sides. "We are still bleeding from the Roman rods, and tyrant

has succeeded tyrant in our land. But Providence has placed in our hands the son of the Goth, who tramples on our heads. Let us kill him, and Flavio's pride will kiss the ground."

"Nay," suggested the old man who seemed to be the chief of the band, "we should gain nothing by this; the sway of the father will be as hard to bear after the son's death as before; let us rather take him to Toledo, and ask of Flavio a ransom for the Prince's life."

"Money! ah, yes, money! gold can buy even freedom."

This measure seemed to meet with approval on all sides, when one of the men, a youth who wore on his head a Latin casque, stolen, I suppose, from some unfortunate Roman, suggested—

"But how do we know that this man is really the personage he pretends to be? Has anyone here ever seen the son of the king?"

These words appeared to unsettle once more the fickle minds of the Spaniards, for they looked at each other in silence, and no one spoke, until at last the old man, whose counsel seemed always to be a command for those lawless mountainers, said:

"Let us take him to Sigberto, he has been at Toledo, and has seen the king and his family; he will tell us if this youth be really Recesvinto, the Prince."

It was now quite day, and the storm had gradually subsided, although distant claps of thunder

recalled now and then a remembrance of the horrors and perils of the preceding night. Emerging from the cave, the entire band commenced descending the steep mountain side, but by a different path from that by which Recesvinto had reached its brow, and with them they carried the unfortunate prince. Slowly they descended the rocks by paths which would have been impassable to any but mountainers, until they reached the valley, where trees and flowers once more grew.

After a few hours' journey, they arrived at a rock which seemed to stand by itself in the centre of a natural circle formed by immense stones, overgrown with vegetation. Here they halted, and securing their prisoner to the rock, they suddenly began to blow their horns in every direction, when almost immediately the very stones seemed alive, so many men sprang up, as it were, from the ground, in answer to the call. They all gathered around the central rock, and with curious eyes scanned the poor victim, who, chained to its base, could hardly move.

"We have found this youth," said the old man, when the whole tribe was assembled; "we found him in a cave at the top of the mountain; he calls himself Recesvinto, the son of Flavio Quindasvinto; do you recognise him, Sigberto?"

A middle-aged man, of a fierce aspect, dressed like the rest in skins and furs, but who, undoubtedly, seemed the head of the whole tribe, now advanced

and looked closely at the Prince; his gaze was so steady and penetrating that Recesvinto involuntarily shut his eyes not to meet it. An imposing silence reigned in the assembly, which was only broken by exclamations of joy when he whom they called Sigberto, drawing himself to his full height, said, in a tone which showed he was used to command,

"This is, indeed, the son of the tyrant, Prince Recesvinto."

The prisoner trembled when he heard the wild cries of joy, which sounded to his ear far more threatening than the claps of thunder of the night before; but when he again looked around, he was most agreeably surprised, so much so that he tried to free his hands from the iron ring which bound them, and to rub his eyes, fearing that what he saw was only a dream, a vision too beautiful to be true.

A maiden, who could hardly have attained her twentieth year, stood by his side; she was remarkably beautiful, although, perhaps, her under lip was a little too pronounced for an irreproachable profile, and her large black eyes, which might be described as deep and penetrating rather than soft and lustrous, rested on his face with an expression of scorn not devoid of a certain amount of compassion.

She was very tall, and around her waist she wore a leathern girdle, from which hung a battle-

axe almost as large as his own, over her right shoulder hung gracefully a leopard's skin, while a close-fitting bodice of scarlet completed her dress. On her head she wore a golden circlet, entwined with oak and laurel leaves, and her glossy black hair hung in luxuriant profusion down her back; her throat, which was bare, might well have served to model a statue, so white and perfect was it, and so gracefully was that fair head set upon it.

"Who are you, divine creature?" exclaimed the Prince as soon as he had sufficiently recovered from his surprise to speak.

The Spanish maiden turned round to those of her tribe who still lingered near them, and in a voice which admitted of no contradiction, she said,

"Unbind the prisoner; I speak to none but those who are able to defend themselves as I am."

The Spaniards untied the cords and unclasped the chains which still bound the Prince, who, when he found himself once more free, taking his battle-axe from his belt, threw it from him.

"What are you doing, Recesvinto?" continued the maiden. "Why throw away your battle-axe? I have mine yet by my side; and besides, if I but raise my hand, a hundred such would come to my aid; but I require none, for I am Serena, she of whom it is written, 'She will have a lion's heart in a woman's breast, and will deliver the oppressed from their oppressors.'"

Recesvinto looked at her mute with astonishment; never had he seen aught like the courage, pride, and natural nobility displayed in this simple girl, whose position could only be that of a shepherd's daughter; but as she stood before him, her right hand resting on her battle-axe and the other pressed upon her bosom, he could not help admiring her strange martial bearing and her beauty, which was indeed queenly.

"You are Serena, you say; pray excuse me, if I ask for an explanation. I am a Goth, and therefore a stranger to the customs of the Spaniards. I ignored that they possessed kings of their own, but now I am convinced I was mistaken, for surely I see before me a queen at this moment."

"I am no queen; I am Serena, the daughter of Sigberto, who is but a humble peasant, and who lives by the work of his hands, but I feel in me a soul which is grander than my station. I was born to command—I feel it, and I do command, and you see that all obey me."

"What you tell me, noble maiden, is wonderful indeed."

"Not so wonderful, perhaps, as you may think, Prince. Before my birth, my father had a vision, —the blessed Virgin appeared to him on the mountain where he had been guarding the sheep of the tribe. In one hand she held the infant Jesus, in the other, this circle of gold which you see on my brow, and as she gave it to him she

told him that the child that would that night be born unto him would have a lion's heart in a woman's breast, and that she would deliver the oppressed from their oppressors. The next morning when he returned to his solitary hut at the entrance of the valley, he found indeed, that as the blessed Virgin had predicted, his wife had borne him a daughter, and he fell on his knees and praised God for this great honour which had been conferred upon him, and he called me Serena, and placed the golden circlet on my brow. All the shepherds and peasants in our mountains believed the prophecy, and to this day they are one and all convinced that I shall one day rival the glories of Viriato, and become the liberator of Spain. In this conviction I was brought up; and I have remained a firm believer in the prophecy of the Virgin; dreaming of my glorious future, and proud of the noble purpose for which I am destined, the humble position which I at present occupy troubles me not. I am sure of the future, I care not for the present, for I feel convinced that the hour of my triumph will shortly arrive."

Recesvinto could not but admire the enthusiastic faith and the courageous spirit of this young girl, who undoubtedly was reverenced and obeyed by all these wild and half-savage men who recognised no earthly ruler, and who had so bravely fought for the last ten centuries against Romans and Vandals, Suevians and Goths, and who seemed

to place implicit faith in her as the divinely-chosen instrument of their future deliverance from all foreign sway.

He also could not but admire her extreme beauty, and her glorious eyes, which, as she spoke, seemed to reflect a divine light, so bright and pure was their expression when she looked at him.

From that moment he felt that this woman had full power over his soul; her look fascinated him as it had already subdued her warlike countrymen, and he knew but too well that his heart was no longer his own. Long days passed before the tribe could make up their minds what to do with the Prince who had so unexpectedly fallen into their hands, but for Recesvinto the time seemed to fly, so happy did he feel by the side of Serena, and I even believe that if he had been free to go where he liked, he would not for one second have thought of leaving the place, for he was spell-bound to her side.

The fact was that never until then had he found a being with whom he could so fully sympathise, and with whom his spirit could commune so freely, and this, in spite of the difference in all their ideas and opinions. Plato believed that from the day of our birth something within us thirsts after its sister soul, and that this feeling, over which we have no control, develops itself with the development of our nature. There is, perhaps, more truth in this observation of the

great philosopher than people are generally apt to believe. Recesvinto entertained no sexual feeling whatever for the beautiful Spanish maiden; he admired her great soul, and her beautiful self, but never for one moment did his mind rest on the gratification of the senses whilst, with an attentive ear and a beating heart, he listened to her long tales of the sufferings and misery which his countrymen had inflicted upon her people.

But though he naturally sympathised more with her great and lofty soul than with her opinions, he could not but incline his just and noble heart to the sad tales he heard of the woes and calamities inflicted upon the poor Spaniards by cruel and half-civilized Goths, and often did her detailed accounts of the general misery of the poor country people, to which he now listened for the first time, fill his eyes with manly tears, and his kind and noble heart with warm sympathy for his father's Spanish subjects whom until then he had believed happy and prosperous.

When Serena discovered the effect which these recitals produced upon him, she formed a plan which every ensuing day only fixed and matured more firmly in her mind.

"You should fight for liberty," she would say to him; "fight for liberty and power; you should become a king, but king of the Spaniards, and of a free, prosperous nation, not king of the tyrannical Goths. God has given you a good heart and a

powerful arm; use it to deliver us from infamy and shame, my countrymen would help you, an army would soon rally round the flag of freedom. *That* would be a life to live for, not your present degraded life, spent in frivolous petty strife between Goth and Goth, or in vilely tyrannising over the already down-trodden Spaniards! Your genius wasted, your ambition paralysed, your penitence deferred, leading a useless life, ending in a death of shame."

"But why," he often answered, wonder-struck at her strange words, "why do you propose this to me; were it not more natural that you should choose a Spaniard for this work?"

"I have tried, but it would not do. The Spaniards are brave enough for anything; they would fight and die round their standard, as their ancestors did in the smoking ruins of Sagunto and Numancia, but they require a leader, they must have a head, and how can I ever expect to find one amongst these half-savage peasants, who for centuries have been reduced to the most menial labours of the field, and condemned to ignorance and degrading slavery? No, it must be one of you Goths who must take the lead, and who will first raise the standard of liberty and freedom; they will soon rally round it as did their fathers round that of the blessed Hermenegildo, who died fighting for them against his cruel and tyrannical father, king Leovigildo, the last of the Arians."

By such eloquent and impassioned language did the fair Serena at last persuade the brave prince to espouse the cause of the Spaniards and become their champion. A man, it has been said, is what a woman makes him. Surely this is more true than you men would care to allow, for are we not after all the mothers, the daughters, the wives, the mistresses of men? To us they owe their birth, to us they owe their principal opinions, it is for us that they fight, for us that they work; and so felt Recesvinto, as one aroused to the utmost pitch of love and admiration for the beautiful Spanish girl. He offered her his hand and his crown if she would only become his companion and adviser for life.

Gladly ran the news throughout the mountains and the plains, and many a noble heart amongst those brave peasants beat with joy as they heard that their miseries would soon be at an end, that the Prince of Spain, the chief of the Visi-Goths, was about to marry one of their daughters. Great feasts and rejoicings succeeded to this unexpected proposal, and the sound of the marriage bells delighted so much the inhabitants of the valley that, in the general joy, one of their prisoners, a Goth, by name Childberto, contrived to escape; but not even this unfortunate incident troubled their happiness, for that very afternoon Serena, robed as a virgin in a tunic of pure white, and with the golden circlet which they believed the gift

of Heaven, on her fair brow, was united to the gallant young knight who was to deliver the Spaniards from the yoke of the tyrant Visi-Goths, and to give them a dynasty of Spanish kings.

VI.

"Oh, give me liberty!
For were ev'n Paradise my prison,
Still I should long to leap the crystal walls."

DRYDEN.

LONG days of undisturbed happiness and joy followed this wedding; as time passed Recesvinto became more and more in love with his bride, and indeed believed her to be an angel whom God had sent to liberate the Spaniards, and to make him the happiest of men.

Serena's love was of another kind, she cared not for her husband, but she was enamoured with the king she thought he would soon become, she felt that the dearly loved prophecy was at last going to be fulfilled, and in her ardent imagination she saw herself seated upon a throne, the beloved queen of the Spaniards. Recesvinto was the instrument of her happiness, and of that of her people, and she therefore loved him as such, and cherished him in her heart.

But her temperament was not one which could sympathise very deeply with scenes of rural tranquillity and undisturbed happiness, she longed for the war which was to place her at last at the head

of the nation, and in her moments of greatest joy, when her enamoured husband pressed her tenderly to his loving heart, she sighed for the sound of the trumpets, and the din of the strife.

"When! oh when, my husband, shall we march on Toledo and raise the standard of freedom?"

Serena's enthusiasm was most catching as Recesvinto already knew; but he could see further than his beautiful bride, and he knew that courage and a good cause alone could not achieve the decisive victory which she, in her ignorance of the world outside her valley, so fondly dreamt of. He also knew that dauntless intrepidity would not, by itself, be sufficient to cause a general rising of the Spaniards, who were at that time almost entirely subjected to their Gothic rulers; besides, how could he, a Goth, and the son of the reigning king, rise in arms against his own nation and against his own fond father, to whom he owed so much?

"No, no, my beautiful Serena," he said. "Trumpets and swords will not do, other means must be employed if we ever want to achieve what we both hope for; no bloodshed must sully our enterprise; if I fight for liberty, it will be the liberty of all. I would not make the Goths slaves in order to liberate the Spaniards. I will go to Toledo myself alone, and I will break the news of our marriage to the king; with his consent, we shall be able to work with some

hope of success; without it, I will not move a step."

Recesvinto was so determined in this, that not even Serena was able to change his designs, so that, after an affectionate farewell, they parted, she returning to her father's house, and he once more pursued his way to Toledo.

VII.

> "I reached the city; many a year
> Has rolled away,
> Since that long day,
> But yet, behold, this truant tear
> Proclaims that trying day is set
> Among the few we ne'er forget.
>
> ELIZA COOK.

A ROYAL mandate from Flavio Quindasvinto, had suddenly been sent to all the castles and towns of the Peninsula, summoning all the counts and governors of counties and provinces to his capital at an early date, and my brother, Count Fruela, had decided, at my request, to take me with him to Toledo to join my betrothed husband, the Prince Recesvinto.

The ancient Toletum of the Romans, at the time I speak of, was a large flourishing town, the capital of the Spanish Visi-Goths. It had been fortified a few years before, by Gothic kings, with an immense outer wall, remarkable for the number and beauty of its towers and gates. Seen from a distance, this city presented a most imposing appearance, for it rose very high upon several hills, and the Tagus flowed round it on the east, south, and west, between high and rocky banks,

over which rose the battlements and ramparts, and behind them an irregular pile of buildings of no precise style of architecture, but which formed a picturesque whole, and between which grotesque but massive buildings might be seen, here and there, an old Pagan temple converted into a Christian basilica, or the high-pointed tower of some convent lately erected. In the centre of the town, which was the highest point, stood the castle, the palace, and the cathedral, the most important buildings, which have long since disappeared to give place to the Alcazar erected by the Moors, and to the glorious Gothic cathedral finished only in 1492, which is to this day one of the marvels of Spain.

Such was Toledo, the city which I now saw for the first time, and in which I was to suffer the most cruel disappointments. The streets which began immediately inside the walls, were then as they are now, torturous and exceedingly narrow and steep, for Toledo has never quite lost its peculiar style, in spite of Gothic and Moorish invasion, and also of the architects of the nineteenth century, who have done more in the way of destruction than either Goths or Vandals, but have not yet straightened its streets nor widened its squares.

The palace to which we went was the one belonging to our family, and where our father had lived for many years in the reign of the

unfortunate Tulga, and of his father, the famous Chintila.

No sooner were we settled in this spacious, but gloomy and depressing mansion, than Fruela hastened to the king's palace, in obedience to the summons he had received. He found the stone galleries, overlooking the Tagus, already crowded with the nobles who had, like himself, been summoned to the royal presence; and the Archbishop of Toledo, Eugenio, Primate of Spain, who, later on, became the famous St Eugenio, was also there by special command. At last Flavio Quindasvinto made his appearance, arrayed in robes of State, and wearing on his head the insignia of royalty. He was an old man with long white hair and beard, which gave him an imposing and venerable aspect, and to all outward appearance seemed, indeed, every inch a king, as the saying is, although he had certainly not been born to that exalted station.

"My reverend bishops and much beloved nobles," he said, taking his seat on the throne, "I have summoned you this day to consult you on a grand project which, I have been thinking, will add greatly to the glory and power of my realm, and I am well pleased to see that you have all so readily obeyed my commands. Let me therefore, before proceeding, thank you, for so doing."

The counts and bishops looked at each other

in silence, and then bowed low to the king—they felt utterly at a loss as to what was coming.

"Six years have passed since, by your own choice, I ascended this throne, and since then I flatter myself that I have given you no cause to regret that choice; but, my beloved subjects, I was already an old man when I succeeded Tulga, and ever since that day, I have grown older and weaker. It is not that the government of the nation weighs too heavily on my shoulders,—indeed, I pray God that I may yet be spared to legislate many more years for you—but in case of war, I fear that I might prove but a poor general, being as you all know, past the age in which the fatigues of a long day's fighting are unfelt. It is true that peace now reigns in our realm, and I pray to the blessed Trinity that it may long continue to do so, for war is the greatest enemy of progress and religion; yet I cannot hide from myself that the Goths are a warlike race, and cannot remain long inactive. It is on this account that I have been thinking of raising to the supreme power with myself, my eldest son, Prince Recesvinto, whom I believe you all like, and in case of my death, *he* would succeed me as your king. For this, of course, I require your votes, which, I have no doubt, seeing the necessity, and the justice of my desire, you will not hesitate in giving."

Low but prolonged murmurs, as if of discontent,

followed this speech, yet several of the nobles, and almost all the prelates present, seconded the king's proposal. My brother, Fruela, however, was amongst those who remained silent. Flavio, with his quick eye and penetrating look, noticed this, and thus addressed him:

"Is it possible, Don Fruela, that you, whose sister is about to marry the Prince, should be one of those who refuse me his vote?"

"I should be very sorry, your Highness, to see the Prince Recesvinto on the throne of Spain; I can only say what I feel."

"But why? has he ever offended you?"

"No, I have no personal enmity towards your son, but I should not like the Gothic monarchy to become hereditary."

"And yet," pursued the king, with a slight frown which gradually deepened as he went on speaking, "The succession from father to son is by no means new amongst us, and I think, the nation has often proved, that she does not object to them. To the great Leovigildo succeeded his son, the Catholic Recaredo."

"Ay, ay, but only after a long and bloody war against his brother, Hermenegildo, whom you Catholics reverence as a saint and a martyr to this day."

"That has nothing to do with the question, besides, at his death, was not his son, Liuca, elected by the nobles to succeed him?"

"Two years afterwards he perished at the hands of Viterico."

"The Second Recaredo was also exalted to the throne of his father, Sirebuto."

Don Fruela made a movement with his right arm as if this discussion tired him, yet he answered the king with apparently as much patience as before.

"Recaredo II. died three months after his coronation. Suintila and his son Recimiro were expelled from Spain, and as to the poor Tulga, who was elected after the death of his father Chintila, you know the sad fate which has befallen him, and how, although still alive, he is obliged to remain in a monastery, while a stranger occupies the throne of his fathers. Such is the fate of those men who have succeeded their fathers on the throne of Spain."

The king now descended from the throne, and stepping towards the Count, he said :

"These are mere excuses ; I see plainly, Don Fruela, that you have a private reason for disliking my son."

"If your Highness will have it so, I will not deny it."

"And am I not to know that secret reason which in your mind seems to disqualify the prince for the throne !"

"Yes, you shall know it, but I am sure you would be the first to wish to conceal it from the

noble counts and reverend prelates here assembled. I will tell you all privately, and then you will be able to judge for yourself if I have good reason for opposing the election of Recesvinto to the Gothic throne."

Flavio, now really alarmed, for he saw that there was indeed a reason for this determined opposition from one of his most powerful nobles, and not merely a young man's quarrel, as he had at first imagined, waved his hand, and the Counts and Bishops bowing before him, withdrew into the outer halls, but murmuring amongst themselves, and showing signs of a curiosity which only the majesty of the royal presence induced them to restrain.

When the young man had been left alone with the aged monarch, who felt at that moment more like a father than like a king, he thus expressed himself:

"Until this morning I held your son to be the bravest and most praiseworthy knight of our empire; I reverenced him as the son of my king, and I loved him as the betrothed husband of my sister, but this morning, when I arrived at my home in Toledo, I was met by a man who had been an esquire of my father's, and who for the last two months had been detained a prisoner by some lawless brigands in the mountains of Toledo. He told me that he saw the Prince Recesvinto, the son of the king, and the betrothed husband of

my sister, actually *marry* a common mountain girl, a Spaniard who has promised to create him king of the Spaniards, and by whom he has, by some such absurd promises, been thus seduced."

If a thunder-bolt had fallen at his feet, the poor father could not have been more horror-stricken and astonished.

"Have I not a powerful reason, brave king, to oppose the election of such a man to the glorious throne of our forefathers?" continued Don Fruela, not noticing the effect which his words had produced upon the old man. "Recesvinto has taken up the cause of the Spaniards, the cause of those vile and lawless people, incapable of a noble idea, or of a fixed plan, and who are destined by heaven to suffer patiently the chains of the conquerors who succeed each other in their land. He has mixed his noble and pure Gothic blood with that of the base, vile slaves, a mixture of Iberian, Lusitanian, Celtic, Phœnician, Greek, Carthagenian, and Roman blood, whitened by the weight of the chains which for ages they have had to bear. I am a Goth, and I desire my children to be Goths, and that they, and they alone, should enjoy the inheritance which the courage and the blood of our noble ancestors conquered from the, until then, all powerful Romans. I know what my race is worth, the noble race which trampled upon the empire of proud Rome; and I want the old faith which has

made us what we are—I mean the real Christian religion—to become once more the religion of the state, and to be alone taught to our children, and not the heresy of the Roman Church, called Catholicism, which Recesvinto introduced. I wish the Spaniards to remain our slaves, because they are only fitted to be slaves; and for this reason, and because I should not like to see on the throne of my forefather, the great Eurico, a man who has so insulted my sister Berenguela, and who desires the degradation of our pure race; and because I think the Gothic monarchy should remain, as it has been until now, elective, I oppose myself to the election of Prince Recesvinto. Do not, therefore, count on my vote, although I fear you will not find it very necessary."

The King had not heard these last words, the news which he had learned bewildered him, and he could not think of anything but the strange conduct of the beloved son he had desired to make a king.

Don Fruela, perceiving at last the state of the monarch, withdrew into the ante-room, and sent for the doctor of the palace, fearing that the effect of the news he had communicated had proved too much for his strength; but Flavio refused to see him, and he remained the whole of that day alone in the great Hall, overpowered by what he had heard.

VIII.

"Grief should be the instructor of the wise;
Sorrow is knowledge; they who know the most
Must mourn the deepest o'er the fatal truth,
The tree of knowledge is not that of life.
Philosophers and science, and the springs
Of wonder, and the wisdom of the world,
I have essay'd, and in my mind there is
A power to make these subject to itself."

LORD BYRON.

IT was late in the afternoon before Fruela returned home, and the sun was fast sinking behind the mountains towards the west, where the dark, ever-rolling waters of the Tagus flow on their way to the ocean.

I descended to the court-yard to meet my brother, when I heard the hoofs of his horse upon the stones, and I was beside him when he alighted from his powerful white steed.

"What news, Fruela?" I exclaimed with a smile. "What knews of him I love; hast thou seen Recesvinto?"

He answered me not, but with a quick step he gained the great saloon, where I soon afterwards followed him.

"Tell me, brother," I again said, "what news of the Prince?"

Still no answer.

"Is he coming to see me?" . . . Fruela gently took my hand in his, and pressed it to his heart.

"Why dost thou not speak, brother? Has any thing happened?"

With a deep sigh he embraced me, and seated himself by my side.

"Yes," he murmured, "you must think no more of him!"

"Recesvinto!" I exclaimed, fearing something had happened to him, when sobs came and choked my utterance, and I could not pronounce another word, and warm tears fell upon my brother's hands.

"Weep not for him," he exclaimed, seeing my tears, "weep not for the villain who has offered such an insult to our house, and has so basely deceived thee. Blood must wash out that injury, not tears!"

"Oh, brother!" I cried, rising to my feet, but still clinging to him, for I felt that, unsupported, I should have fallen to the ground. "Tell me all, oh, for pity sake, conceal nought. Tell me, tell me all you know. Ah, I guess too truly by that look of thine, that all joy is lost to me for ever, and that henceforth my life will be a blank. . ."

"Away with unavailing grief, daughter of Eurico, thou shouldst think only of revenge,—he whom thou lovest hast proved unworthy of thy love; he has married another, a common slave, who is not worthy to untie thy shoe-string."

The hot tears dried suddenly on my cheek. My eyes assumed a look of calm, haughty defiance. I was too proud to betray any sign of suffering, although I felt my heart had been rent asunder. No outward sympathy could counteract the bitterness of this inward woe, None but myself should henceforth know how deeply I still loved the Prince.

IX.

> "She is so conjunctive to my life and soul,
> That as the star moves not but in his sphere,
> I could not but by her."
>
> SHAKESPEARE.

THE whole of that night the poor king remained alone in the great hall of the castle of Toledo, overpowered by the news he had heard. As he began to realise to its full extent the strange conduct of his unnatural son, he gradually sank into a pitiable state of prostration of spirits, alternating with occasional bursts of fury.

"Ah fool, fool that I was to nourish a serpent in my bosom that would end by stinging me to the quick. Traitor! parricide! I am too old to wear a crown! too feeble to wield a sword? I had placed all my hope in thee, I had loved thee more than my kingdom, more even than myself; and in return thou takest the part of my enemies, nay of my slaves, and thou turnest them against me, against their master and thy master!

Towards morning he was a little calmer; he began to think of what could be done to remedy the evil, to undo the marriage if possible. He ordered his son to be brought to him.

Recesvinto entered the royal presence with a

firm step and a loving look for his father, whom he had not seen since his departure for Seville, and advancing up the hall he knelt before him and clasped his arms around the old man's neck as he had often done before, while he reverently kissed his right hand.

Flavio was too much moved to stop him, but when he felt the pressure of his beloved son's lips upon his hand, the tears which he had been unable to shed in that long long night rushed to his eyes and relieved him as tears alone can relieve and soothe.

"Ah, my brave, my beloved boy," he exclaimed, "thou couldst never forget thy old father, thou couldst never turn traitor; thou wilt tell me that what I have heard of thee is untrue; swear to me that thou art not married to a slave as I have been told, and I will make thee king of Spain."

Recesvinto answered not, he had not been prepared for such a reception; he had counted on his father's ignorance, to have gently broken to him the dreaded news of the marriage, but now it was too late, he could not deny the fact.

Flavio looked at his son in silence, he saw what was passing in his mind, he saw that Fruela's news was only too true, and with a strength of which no one seeing his age would have still believed him capable, he repulsed his son from him; who, unprepared for this rude blow, fell on the ground at his feet.

"Thou art no longer my son, I disown thee as David disowned Absalom."

"Ah father, I have well deserved thy anger, I am indeed married to a Spaniard, but I feel sure that if you saw her, if you knew her, you yourself would have acted as I have done. I have tried to look upon her as a stranger, as a slave, but I have failed, to me she is more than my equal, she is my queen, she is my God. Human love, father, is not the growth of human will."

"And you have married a Spaniard! a slave!"

"A Spaniard! Ah! and I glory in the name too, I would gladly sacrifice my life for their welfare, for the welfare of that noble race which we so unjustly and despotically tyrannise over."

"A Spaniard! the very name breathes of slavery and misery, and you have mingled your pure Gothic blood with that of those cowards!"

"Rome was two hundred years before she could conquer them, those cowards as you call them; and not even then was their spirit subdued. Do you call a nation cowardly, Sire, which prefers death to submission to a foreign rule, and who in a blazing furnace prefers to bury its riches and its children rather than that they should become Romans? You are proud of our victories, proud of having conquered the Romans when vice and luxury had enervated and degenerated them, and rendered them old and weak before their time, but what think you of a people who achieved victories over

the great, the all-powerful Romans of old? What think you of a nation which Cæsar himself calls the terror of his empire? Ay, proud king of the Goths! all our glories fade into the shade by the side of those blazing furnaces of Sagunto and Numancia.

"Would you call coward a nation capable of such a fierce and steady resistance? If to-day their virtues are of a more sober, more penitent and enduring kind, it is because we with our cruel oppressions have made them so. Our forefathers were Arians, but we have been obliged to accept the religion of those you call our slaves, and make it our own, we have turned Catholics to please them. Do you think, Sire, that a people who are incapable of a fixed idea as you believe the Spaniards to be, could thus impose its religion upon its rulers? If the Spaniards surrendered themselves so easily to our forefathers, it was only to escape the sway of the Byzantine court and the brigandage of the avaricious Franks, Suevians, and Vandals who overran the country draining it on all sides, if we have so unjustly turned them into our slaves, and if we have made ourselves masters over them, it has only been through the force of circumstances, but in their hearts they have never submitted to our sway. Nations are often compelled to recognise as facts what they would be craven to sanction as right. We have conquered their country, we have taken possession

of their land but not of their hearts, they are still free and ever will be, and if they submit to the rule of the Gothic king, and to the laws he chooses to establish, it is only because they have no king of their own to obey, no organised system of government; and you know very well, oh king! that it is for fear they should ever become an organized community that we have taken such care to shut all the doors against them, and to block up the few roads by which they might have attained progress and enlightenment, and yet, even thus they manage to creep in amongst us, through the narrow doors of the church and the convent, and also from the pulpit they manage to influence us, nay even to govern us, for is not the very Archbishop of Toledo, the prime minister of your realm, a Spaniard? The Spaniards enter into our palaces through the doors of the temple; let us open to them also the roads to fame and wisdom. Ah father! if you had penetrated as I have into the homes of those you call slaves; if you had studied their noble natures, and high aspirations as I have done, you too would be obliged to acknowledge that they are in every way worthy to share in the produce of the land which we have so easily conquered, even with the sons of Eurico and Ataulfo."

Flavio could say nothing to this outburst of noble passion of his son, he could not but feel that

he was right in his sentiments, and yet, they were opposed to all he had been accustomed to hear, to all the traditions of his race, in which until then he had so blindly believed.

"Has your wife told you all these things?"

"Yes, she is an angel of purity and strength, a saint upon earth."

"By St. James, I will see her and judge for myself!" exclaimed the king, feeling an intense desire in his heart to see this woman who had operated such a change in his son's mind, and to judge justly, weighing both sides alike.

"You tell me this Spaniard is an angel of purity and strength, I believe that there is not one amongst that race who is worthy of being, I will not say the wife, but the mistress of a Goth."

"What a blasphemy! if you knew Serena, if you knew her virtues, her courage, her wisdom . . . . . !"

"Would those virtues, that courage, that wisdom bear a test, a trial . . . . ?"

"Her noble nature is like the gold, it might break, but it will not bend."

"Do you defy me?"

"Yes."

"By St. James I will try that nature of which you seem so proud and . . . . ."

"And . . . . . will you forgive me and receive

her as your daughter if this trial result favourably ?"

"As my daughter ? a Spaniard ! Never ! . . . . . ." exclaimed the proud king, then looking at his beloved son he murmured, ... "well, we shall see."

X,

"There is a star that cheers our way
Along this dreary world of woe,
That tips with light the waves of life,
However bitterly they flow."

ELIZA COOK.

IN one of the galleries of the Castle of Toledo stand two youthful figures, the one is Recesvinto, the Gothic Prince, the other is Serena, his Spanish bride; who by command of the king has been brought a prisoner to the capital.

"What means this, Recesvinto? Wherefore have they brought me hither? am I a prisoner or a queen? why have they taken me away from my faithful people? why have I been brought to this palace without your coming to fetch me?"

"My beloved Serena, you will need all your courage."

"Has it ever failed me?"

"Let me explain all this mystery to you dearest wife, in as few words as possible. I came direct to Toledo last week when I left thee in thy happy valley; I came here to my father and told him all; how I loved you, and how we were married; he was furious, nothing would appease his rage, and . . . . he insulted your countrymen . . . ."

"Oh, if I had been there!"

"So I told him, I talked to him of thy beauty, of thy courage, of thy constancy, and he would not believe me! At last he said that he would try you, that he would put your courage and your constancy to the proof, and for this he has given orders that you should be brought to his palace. Do you think that you will be capable of suffering this momentary trial? Think of my love, which will never abandon thee, think of thy Recesvinto, who will constantly pray to God that He may give thee strength."

"I will think of Spain and of the oppressed Spaniards; hope will never abandon me, the cause of liberty will not fail to give me strength. Let thy cruel father come with all the trials and torments his hard heart can imagine, I fear them not; the holy Virgin will help me through them all, I despise alike the despot and his tools."

Recesvinto clasped her to his heart, he felt convinced that a supernatural power would give her strength; and he feared no longer for her.

They were still in each other's arms when the door behind them opened, and the king entered the gallery leading me by the hand.

I had come to the palace that morning for the first time at the special request of Flavio Quindasvinto, but I had not anticipated seeing Recesvinto there, whom I believed far away from Toledo; the sight of him made my blood run cold, and I

was obliged to cling to the king's arm to avoid falling to the ground.

"The king!" exclaimed Recesvinto, in a loud voice which made me tremble, at the same time moving a little aside. Serena remained in the centre of the apartment like a statue, not a muscle in her whole frame moved, although she knew that all our eyes were fixed on her, and she could not but be conscious of the attention which she engrossed.

"Slave," exclaimed the king, approaching quite close to her. "Slave, thou hast dared to delude my son, the Prince of Spain! On your knees, I am thy king."

The Spanish maiden looked up at her husband as if to ask him his advice; at a motion of his head, she knelt down before the stern monarch; but her face expressed no sign that might have been taken for reverence or respect; in this trying day of her life she felt herself superior to king and princes, and her handsome features, forced by the all-powerful control she possessed over herself, into a stern composure, only betrayed pride and haughtiness, while her large black eyes flashed with such triumphant fierceness, that they made even those of the king turn involuntarily to the ground.

"Do you know, deceitful woman, that our laws forbid a marriage between Spaniard and Goth? Thy marriage, therefore, is unlawful."

Serena answered not, she, indeed, ignored the Gothic law, and the idea that her marriage might ever be disputed, had certainly never entered her head; but she was too proud to show her ignorance; too proud to show how this news wounded that very pride.

"Prince Recesvinto was already betrothed to this lady you here see by my side."

The proud Spaniard could keep silent no longer, and in spite of herself, her cheeks, and even her lips, assumed a ghastly paleness, and she fixed her penetrating gaze on me.

"Holy Virgin," she exclaimed, "is it possible!"

"Yes," continued the king, "and according to our laws; persons who have been betrothed cannot celebrate any other union, unless the alliance be broken off by a mutual agreement."

A ray of light seemed to enter my soul; I forgot for one moment how faithless the prince had proved to me; I saw him standing there in all the beauty of his manly bearing as he had so often stood on the battlements of our castle on the banks of the Guadalquivir; I forgot everything but that I was still his betrothed wife, that he was still my betrothed husband, and that I should never agree to withdraw the claim I still had upon him.

"This lady, I am sure, seeing that the Prince loves her not, will be only too glad to break her engagement with him," said the beautiful Spaniard,

turning once more towards the Prince, and rising from the ground where she had remained until then, I followed the direction of her look, and I saw that Recesvinto encouraged her with a loving smile. At that moment I would gladly have changed places with her, for I saw that he loved her as he had never loved me. But I too was proud, and I tried to hide my emotion as well as I could.

"No," I exclaimed, "I do not give up my claims to the Prince's hand, he is still my betrothed husband."

I saw that Serena trembled, although she too tried very hard to conceal her emotion, but this slight movement of her frame repaid me for all I had had to bear during that trying day.

A long silence reigned after this; during which was heard the distant laughter of the soldier on the parapet below, and the mournful bells of the convent of St Isidoro, which announced the death of one of their monks. At last my brother was the first to break this long pause.

"The betrothed who marries some one else, becomes, from that moment, according to our laws, the slave of the lady he has deceived, and his bride also becomes her slave."

Serena advanced a few steps towards the Prince as if to seek his support, but suddenly checking herself, she said in a tone of voice which she in vain tried to render firm,

"Then I . . . . . then Recesvinto . . . . . "

"Are both the slaves of Doña Berenguela."

"As for the Prince," I exclaimed, "I forgive him."

A look of gratitude from the king gave me more strength. "I pardon him," I continued, "for I believe him to be sorry in his heart for the way he has behaved towards me! as for this woman, she was born to be a slave, and the chains of servitude will weigh lightly upon her."

Flavio now advanced to the centre of the gallery, and taking Serena by the hand, he brought her to me, saying,

"Slave, behold thy mistress."

I fixed my eyes upon her, and with an hysterical laugh, I gave her my train to hold, which she took and carried behind me, but as proudly as if she had been a queen receiving a crown. After this, we all left the gallery. As I passed near the Prince, I bowed to him in silence, and half put out my hand to meet his, but he looked at me with an expression of scorn, and did not acknowledge my bow, but instead, he approached Serena, and with much veneration, kissed her hand as he might have done that of a saint and a martyr.

This action made me feel once more all the pangs of jealousy, and in that, my hour of triumph, I felt more like the conquered than like the conqueror, although my rival walked behind me bearing my train.

XI.

"Joyful is the woe for a noble cause, and welcome all its miseries." SIR PHILIP SYDNEY.

DREADFUL as that first night must have been for the courageous Spanish girl who, in one single instant, had passed from freedom to slavery; from being the beloved wife of the Prince Recesvinto —heir of a powerful monarch—to a slave, a defenceless victim in her rival's hands; and yet, ten thousand times more dreadful was it for me, for she had the consolation of being beloved, whilst I—I felt that what had happened that day had raised a barrier between me and my love which hereafter nothing could break down. I had become hateful in his eyes, hateful in the eyes of the man I loved most in the world, and yet, I could not undo what I had done. I could not give Serena her freedom,—it was too sweet a feeling to have her in my possession, to be able to do with her as I liked; it was a feeling of revenge, but revenge is sweet to unpurified spirits, and I was still very low in the scale of goodness at that time.

As for Serena herself, she could not but feel that she was in the right all the time; her

heroic courage never failed her, she had still full confidence in herself, and in the protection of the Blessed Virgin, on whose support she relied. "I will let everyone see," she exclaimed, "that I am above earthly feelings, that I despise the miseries of the world, and I will prove to that proud King that the slave is far nobler than the Countess, and far more worthy of being the Queen of Spain."

The next morning I dressed myself in my richest attire; I placed my handsomest jewels, those which my mother had lent me to appear at court, in my hair; and when the polished steel plate which served me as a mirror told me that I looked my best, I gave orders for my new slave to be brought to me.

Serena entered my closet; she looked pale, for she was one of those whose cheeks become blanched instead of flushed by any great emotion; but her delicate transparent skin made her appear still handsomer than she had done the previous day. Her large black eyes did not look so wild and startled as they had appeared then; but they still flashed with concentrated indignation. She stood there in the centre of the closet, calm, watchful, and expectant, and her proud lips firmly compressed. Whilst I, although with my back turned towards her, could see every movement of her face as I compared it with mine in the polished plate before me.

The flattering compliments of the young knights at Seville had perhaps made me rather vain, but as I compared my countenance with that of my rival, it struck me that I was the prettier of the two, although she was perhaps the handsomest in reality.

As I turned towards her, her deep eyes looked back steadily into mine, but by a slight movement of my head, I contrived to turn her gaze to the table beside me, where lay the iron collar I had prepared for her, together with a pair of scissors and the sharp pointed dagger which was then used to punish slaves with. I knew that this sight would have a great effect upon her, but her eyes fell—that was all,—she still stood before me calm and self-possessed, with the air of one who has been long prepared, and who, when the fatal hour arrives, is not overwhelmed, but rises superior to the occasion, and goes forth to encounter, and prepared to contend with destiny.

"Come woman, come nearer to me. I have determined to honour the beauty who has so captivated the Prince's heart by cutting off her hair with my own hand. It is a pity that those lustrous locks must fall; it is a pity that that proud neck must henceforth be concealed beneath an iron collar, but it is not my fault that this should be the end of thy grand ambition, the unlooked-for end of thy well-planned schemes.

Thou art my slave, Serena, but I will be a kind mistress to thee. I will always have thee near me; thou shalt be the slave who will attire me, dress my hair, sleep at the foot of my bed. Thou seest that I mean well. Come now here, kneel down before me, that I may, with my own hands, cut off thy hair."

"I am your slave, Dona Berenguela, do with me as you please, your conduct is indifferent to me." Deep and low grew her voice as she spoke these words—deep and low, restrained with that restraint which is put over the feelings by a strong nature; and yet, they could not hide from me that consuming passion which burnt in her breast, nor the fierce fire which flashed in her eye, but she knelt down at my feet, and let me cut off her long glossy curls, which touched the ground all around her, with calm, self-commanding patience. When I had finished, and her beautiful black locks lay scattered on the marble pavement, she raised her head, and, unable to encounter the stern gaze of that woman, whom I felt to be my superior in every way, I was obliged to fix my eyes on the floor.

"I have power over you of life and death, see how you obey my orders, slave." As I said these cruel words, I took in my hand a few of the short hairs which still hung from her brow, and lifted her head, so that I might look into her face. It bore no expression of pain, though

I must have inflicted it by raising her head in that rough way, but I observed with pleasure that she no longer looked beautiful. I thought to myself that not even Recesvinto would admire her now. I then took the iron collar with my name engraved upon it, which lay upon the table, and I clasped it around her neck.

As I was doing this my brother entered the apartment; he looked at me and then he looked at Serena; a strange expression appeared on his countenance, and I felt that he too, saw that the slave was the superior of the mistress.

"I am going to church," I said, "to thank God for the happy termination of the events of yesterday; Serena will carry my stool; will you accompany me, brother?"

He again looked at me, and then at my slave. "No," he said, "there is no Christian church in Toledo, and I will not pray in a Catholic basilica, but you can go; yes, go and show yourself with your rival carrying your stool behind you; go and enjoy your victory. It would be a sight of shame to me, rather than one of triumph."

The meaning of his words entered my heart, but I had made a vow to the virgin that I would go and pray to her, if I gained a victory over my rival, and I felt bound to perform my promise. I therefore sallied forth from the palace, with Serena carrying my stool behind me, whilst my other slaves followed at a respectful distance.

The news of my triumph had by this time reached every part of the city, and great crowds of people lined the streets, awaiting my arrival. We were greeted with cries of disgust and cries of admiration, according as they proceeded from Goths or Spaniards, for the first looked upon Serena as a great criminal who had dared to aspire to a throne, whilst the Spaniards and Romans naturally took her part. But both parties, however different their opinions, could not but admire her proud bearing, and her extreme beauty, which made her position so touching.

Don Fruela, who watched us from one of the windows of our palace, was also obliged to exclaim, "She is indeed beautiful; I no longer wonder at the prince marrying her."

XII.

"Can hate turn to love?"

MILTON.

Two months had passed since the scene I have just related. I had not seen Recesvinto since that day in the palace, when Serena was given to me as my slave. He had gone to suppress a rising of the Vasques, said some; he had been imprisoned by order of the king, others assured me; whilst my brother would have it, that he had gone to raise an army to dethrone his father, and regain possession of his wife.

We, too, had left Toledo, and had returned to our castle in Seville, where our mother, the old Countess Theodolinda, had been seriously ill, and had sent for us.

I had my rival in my power; I could do what I liked with her, and yet I was far from being happy. I knew that Recesvinto did not love me, and every day I repented of the generous way in which I had pardoned him—the idea that the king would never have allowed his beloved son to become my slave, never entered my head. I thought that if I had so decided, I might have had him at my feet all this time. In the meanwhile, I

exercised all my arts to tyrannise over Serena and make her suffer for what I in my turn had to suffer; for I still felt in my heart the cruel, revengeful spirit that had animated the Indian Ananda, and my passions were almost as strong and bitter, as when, in the Castle of Daphadah, I planned the death of Channa.

"You have never had a slave who dressed you with so much care as Serena,' said my brother to me one day, as we stood on the ramparts overlooking the river, where I had so often stood with Recesvinto.

"It is true," I answered. "At first I feared that she would have served me against her will, but I am glad to see I have been mistaken. Having been born a slave, her present position naturally comes easy to her."

"Perhaps it is because her soul is too grand and too noble to mind the hardships and petty cruelties you impose upon her. Her great spirit rises above such things, for a proud woman who has learnt to submit, carries all her pride to the reinforcement of her submission. I daresay even in her present condition she considers herself far superior to you."

"Your opinion of the Spaniards has changed considerably, I see, of late."

"No, I despise them as much as I ever did."

"And their women?"

"Also."

"Without any exception?"

Don Fruela moved a few steps, looking still at the stately galleys on the river, before he said:

"Do you imagine that I have fallen in love with Serena?"

"Madly," I answered, laconically.

He turned and faced me. I saw his broad, intellectual brow darken, while his fair curls waved in the morning breeze under his helmet; he drew himself up to the full height of his tall, stalwart frame, and came towards me.

"Mind how you treat her then," he said, in a tone which confirmed my suspicions to their full extent. He was in love with Serena. He, the stern Goth, who so despised the Spaniards, the proud man who had said that this very woman was not worthy to untie my shoe string! He loved her! Was I sorry? Was I glad? I could hardly tell yet, for although I had seen this change coming gradually upon him, I had never imagined that he would thus end by confessing himself in love with her; he, who had been the cause of all her misfortunes; he who had hated her, even before he had seen her, with all the hate of a conqueror and a Visi-Goth.

A few days later, he found himself on the same spot with Serena, who had gone there to breathe the refreshing air from the Guadalquivir.

"Do not the caprices of my sister weary you sometimes, Serena?" he said, approaching her.

"No," she answered, with her usual air of haughtiness that made her look so superior to everyone else. "No, I am her slave; more, I am her rival, and it is only natural that she should try to make me unhappy."

"Does she make you unhappy?"

"'No, I think not of her; I think only of the destiny that awaits me when the ordeal and its preliminary trials are at an end."

"Do you then still believe yourself destined to become a queen?"

"A queen!" she answered, as if astonished that this question should come from the lips of her master.

"A queen! well, perhaps, but the liberator of Spain undoubtedly."

"Your faith is strong, you have great confidence in yourself, but you go the wrong way to work. Recesvinto will never be king."

"I count not upon him."

"You do well, for he has forgotten you, and abandoned you to your rival, but independently of that, he will never be king of Spain; the nobles have sworn to vote for another after the death of the present king; perhaps they will raise him to the throne before then, and that man is *myself!*"

"I thought as much," said Serena in her usual calm manner; "you are braver, more ambitious than Recesvinto, and will make a better king."

Don Fruela thought himself dreaming when he

heard this; could it be possible that it was Serena who spoke thus? He could hardly believe his ears; but her words were so sweet to him, they so flattered his vanity, that, taking her in his arms, he exclaimed, in a rapture of love,

"Wilt thou share my fortune, Serena?"

The Spaniard gave a sharp cry, and with one effort freed herself from his embrace.

"Never," she exclaimed; "I am still the wife of Recesvinto."

Don Fruela burst into a satirical laugh which made her shudder in spite of her self-command.

"You are not, and never have been Recesvinto's wife; a Goth cannot marry a Spaniard according to our laws; he has deceived you when he called himself your husband; you have been but his mistress. But I understand you better than he did, you never loved him, you never could have loved him, but you wanted power, riches. I offer them all to you; be mine and I will make you the first woman in Spain. I offer you everything, everything, except my hand, which I cannot give to a Spaniard, if you will only become mine . . . . . for I love you!"

"How dare you insult me thus, Don Fruela! I despise you, I hate you, and I would rather die than become yours!"

As she said this her eyes flashed with a strange light, and her cheek flushed painfully whilst the

brilliant sun of Andalucia fell full upon her. But the Count, excited and carried away by passion, once more approached her. Serena stood with her back towards the river, leaning on the stone-work of the parapet, and as she saw him advancing towards her, blinded by desire, and excited with love, she once more shuddered and looked at the waters beneath her, as if to seek protection there from his passionate frenzy, for she well knew that in that state he would have dared anything. But a moment afterwards she was herself again, and she advanced to meet him with the proud look that was her chief charm, and a half-disdainful smile on her lips, which had now once more recovered their habitual coral hue.

"Back! back!" she exclaimed, in a low but commanding tone, which showed no signs of fear. "Is this the way thou wouldst win my love . . . . ? by insulting me . . . . ? by forcing me . . . . ? Back! I say, back! and on thy knees, for I am thy Sovereign."

Don Fruela stopped and looked at her, as she stood there against the setting sun, her simple garments flowing in the evening breeze, and her short hair surrounding her head like an aureole of glory. He felt that she was indeed his Princess, his superior, and almost involuntarily he bent the knee before her.

She now extended her hand to him, which he

kissed with all the reverence which he would have bestowed upon that of a queen.

"Let us be friends," she said after a pause; "we both have need of each other. You want to become a king, I want to free the Spaniards; we cannot afford to quarrel. But see, here comes your sister, the jealous Doña Berenguela, she must not see you thus at the feet of her much-envied rival; rise Don Fruela, let us once more become—thou the proud Count, and I the humble slave."

My brother rose to his feet just as I was approaching, so that I saw at a glance that something had happened between them.

"Brother," I said, "you seem very familiar with my waiting-maid, with my slave."

"She is your slave no longer, you shall not exercise your revenge any more on this unfortunate woman, you have already made her suffer too much."

"She is my property," I exclaimed, "you dare not take her from me."

"From this moment she is mine, and I shall do with her what pleases me without requesting your permission."

"Is this the way you treat the betrothed wife of your prince? She is my property, the king himself gave her to me, will you take her away from me in defiance of your king?"

"I recognise no king but myself, this castle is mine from turret to foundation-stone, and in it I

shall do what pleases me. Flavio Quindasvinto has no power over me, for I am as much king over Seville as he is over Toledo. Mark what I say, Berenguela, if it please me I can make this slave queen over you."

He offered his arm to Serena and they both walked silently past me into the hall which opened on to the battlements. As she passed she fixed her eyes on me, but there was no sign whatever of scorn in that gaze, nothing to show she felt that she triumphed over me, only the same stern proud look she used to bestow upon me when I most cruelly insulted her.

"If Recesvinto could but see them," was my first thought, "he would no longer think of her, but he is far away and still believes her faithful to him, he will love her to the very last!"

Shortly after this I too entered the castle and went straight to my mother's room, in whose lap I buried my head and relieved my lacerated feelings and overburdened heart. Her kind sympathising love soon brought me back to myself and made me forget my woes.

"You lose nothing in that girl, she is but a perpetual spy on all your actions; don't you see that her position only made her more interesting in the eyes of the Prince? Fruela will liberate you at once of the spy and the rival. As for him, I am not afraid; he is too proud and hates the Spaniards too much, to love her very deeply."

XIII.

"Though pride may show some nobleness
When honour's its ally,
Yet there is such a thing on earth!
As holding heads too high!
The sweetest bird builds near the ground,
The loveliest flower springs low;
And we must stoop for happiness,
If we its worth would know."

SWAIN.

FROM that day I saw no more of Serena. I knew, through my other slaves, that she was still in the castle, but that Don Fruela had given orders that she should be treated like a lady of rank, and respected by all her former companions as such. His love for her grew stronger and stronger every day, and now he began to flatter himself that his ardent passion was not without an echo in the warm heart of the Spaniard.

How strange, I repeated to myself, "that this woman should be able to inspire such love in all men as even to change their very natures."

But so it was, her proud bearing joined to her extreme beauty had completely won the heart of my brother, as it had before won the heart of my lover.

One morning they were standing side by side on the top of the grand old Roman tower which

commanded such an extensive view all over the country. At their feet flowed the majestic Bœtis. which even then, was crowded with the stately galleys of the Greeks and Goths which brought to our very doors the commerce of Egypt and Constantinople, and on the right side of this mighty river rose, close to its waters, the powerful city of Seville, the capital of Southern Spain, surrounded by high walls, and surmounted by the elevated tower upon which Saint Hermenegildo had received the palm of martyrdom only a century before.

"The town at our feet with its powerful fortresses, and all the country around as far as your eyes can reach, with its many castles and keeps, are mine," said Don Fruela. "At one word from my mouth two thousand Gothic warriors will rush into the field and march upon Spain, nay, to the very gates of Toledo. Twenty Counts almost as powerful as myself have sworn to help me. In less than a year I shall be king of Spain. Hark Serena! do you hear the glorious sound of that word king!—king of Spain?"

"Say rather king of the Goths, the Spaniards recognize not your foreign rule."

"They will be obliged to submit to it nevertheless, for all are not like you, my Serena, my beautiful Serena."

"At the sound of liberty all men are alike. Weak woman as I am—a slave—I too can raise

two thousand men, I too can send an army into the field—an army as courageous and brave as yours, if inferior in strength. Liberty! liberty! that word has, indeed, a glorious sound; *that* should be your cry, and at that cry the very women will rise and fight for you."

"Is it possible, Serena, that you, with your proud haughty soul, have been for so long the humble slave of my sister, submissively obeying her strangest whims?"

"Degrading as was my late position, Don Fruela, and deep as the iron of my chains had entered into my soul, I found a stern pleasure in submitting to my fate. I shed no tears, I uttered no sigh, no, not even in secret; but if I were again to become your sister's slave, I fear that my proud heart, though it might not bend, would quickly break."

"Oh, my love!" was all the enamoured knight could utter, and he pressed her to his heart. "Will you be my . . . . my wife, my queen?"

"Your wife! your queen!"

"Ah, but not under false pretences. Although I am Recesvinto's rival and enemy, yet I bear him no ill-will, I will not steal his wife from him; but if she give herself freely to me, why—then I am justified in marrying her. A few days ago, when I asked you to be mine, I told you that the Prince loved you not. I told a lie; I sought to deceive you that you might the more readily

yield to my love; but now I love you too much to use such dishonourable means. I will preserve your esteem even if I lose your love. Recesvinto loves you still; he has sought often and often, since your confinement in my castle to rescue you from your prison, to make you once more his wife; he loves you now as much as he did the day he married you in your sequestered valley; do you love him still?"

Serena buried her face in her hands, and after a pause, which seemed years to Don Fruela, she answered,

"I love him not; I never loved him. Yet I suppose I am wrong; I suppose I should be like other wives, and love him above all men; but I cannot help my nature; to me the liberty of Spain is dearer than Recesvinto's love."

"Ah how happy you make me! So you will be my wife, my queen?"

Serena hesitated still another moment. "Yes," she murmured at last; "I feel in me the spirit that animated Judith, Delilah, and Esther, I must, like them, sacrifice myself for the good of my country. I will be your wife, but only on one condition."

"Name it."

"When Recesvinto married me, he promised to emancipate the Spaniards and the Romans, and to declare them equal with the Goths and Visi-Goths in all the realms he should conquer. It was only

under this promise which I made him swear upon his sword, that I married him; it is only after you have sworn the same, that I will consent to become your wife."

"You ask me, *me* to make the Spaniards equal with the Goths! the slaves equal to the masters! Don't you know that it was my hatred for that degraded race that has made me an enemy of Recesvinto?"

"And you want to marry a daughter of that degraded race!" exclaimed the beautiful woman, whilst a look of scorn animated her perfect features. "If *you* marry a Spaniard, why should you not let your subjects do the same? You should allow those who have not the hatred you have for that race, to marry Spaniards if they like."

"The beauty of one Spaniard shall free the whole race, by St James! And, after all, it will be but good policy, for the king, who will want to subject the turbulent nobles, will sooner or later be compelled to call the people to his aid. Besides, the Spaniards will aid me to mount the throne. . . . . Serena, perforce, I yield to thy wish; the Spaniards and the Goths shall be equal from the day I become their king."

"There is yet another thing which you must swear. Besides being a Spaniard, I am a Catholic; you must abjure your religion and become the same."

"That I never will. I become a Tritheist, a

Consubstantialist! never! I abandon my dearest dream!—that of converting the Visi-Goths once more to the true religion of Christ, to the great faith which has made them what they are—never! . . . . never ask me that, Serena, for not even your love will make me abjure my faith!"

"The blessed Virgin, when she appeared to my father, and communicated the honour which awaited me, stipulated that Spain should remain true to the church of her Son. She would undoubtedly withdraw her supernatural aid if I were to marry an Arian. Besides, if you persist in your heresy, neither the Spaniards nor the Goths will aid you in your enterprise, for they are both Catholics. You alone remain a heretic; the Romans, the Greeks, the Goths, the Spaniards, all have submitted to the holy synods of Nice and Toledo; all the Christian world, after a war of three hundred years, now professes at last, the same orthodox creed; would you remain alone the enemy of Christ?"

Don Fruela remained silent for some minutes; at last he said, "When I am king, I will summon a second council at Toledo, and decide what I shall do after having weighed both sides of the question with equal justice; until then, I shall remain an Arian; but you will become my wife, will you not, beautiful Serena?"

"Yes, under those conditions, for I feel certain that the blessed Virgin will turn your noble

heart and convince you of the truth of her cause."

"We shall see; at this moment all is indifferent to me, for I have you in my arms."

And the proud Goth once more clasped the slave in his arms, and this time she did not withdraw herself from his embrace.

"Hark! hark, Fruela!" she suddenly exclaimed, "don't you hear the sound of horses' hoofs below?"

This aroused him from his trance.

"There is no time to lose if you will ascend the throne of Spain; give me a few horsemen, and I will myself ride to our mountains and summon my faithful Spaniards to the fight."

"No, I will not let *you* go, but you shall have as many messengers as you like to send to the mountains of Toledo."

"That will do just as well. I hasten to my chamber, where I shall write to my father Sigberto that the moment predicted by the Virgin has arrived; in less than two weeks you will see these plains covered with Spanish warriors, who will fight for freedom or for death."

XIV.

"Ambition breaks the ties of blood, and forgets the obligations of gratitude." SIR WALTER SCOTT.

MESSENGERS were sent by my brother to all the different nobles who had sworn to help him, and by Serena to her father Sigberto, and to the different centres of Spanish discontent. The sound of approaching war soon resounded in our castle, in Seville, and in all the country around. Our pages and esquires prepared themselves on all sides to meet the hardships of war, and many a young heart beat with unusual vigour at the thought of the glory to be achieved, and the booty to be gained. Rich old Jews were often seen in the corridors of the castle, who came to lend their gold to my brother at no small per centage, and every one in the place tried to outvie each other in the ardour and activity with which they devoted themselves, each one in his own province, to the preparations for the approaching conflict.

One morning the Arian Bishop of Seville, Laureano, who was the last of that faith in Spain, arrived at the castle attired in all the splendour of his canonical robes, for the successors of the

meek and lowly apostles already affected in all things a regal pomp, and wore on their heads crowns like kings; and then we learned for the first time that Don Fruela was to be united to Serena on that day. The ceremony, however, was carried on in solemn secrecy, no one being present, by the express command of the bride, but the bishop and two esquires who were to serve as witnesses.

As they came out of the chapel, however, I managed to see them from behind a piece of tapestry of my own working, which hung before a door long ago closed up.

She was dressed in white brocade embroidered in silver, and on her head she wore a Countess's coronet surrounded by the miraculous circlet which she believed a gift from heaven, and which she had managed to conceal during the time of her slavery.

My brother was also gorgeously attired, and his face showed signs of the greatest happiness.

"Ah, Recesvinto!" I exclaimed, "is it possible that this woman could ever have loved you, could ever have been your wife?"

"If he only knew of this marriage!" was the thought that came into my head, "If he only knew how faithless she has proved to him, perhaps he would then think of me! perhaps he would love me again."

Should I write to him? That would have

been to have betrayed my brother, discovering all his projects to his enemy. I could not do that.

For two days I was in this state of uncertainty. Love and duty, jealousy and happiness, were struggling in my soul. I had to choose between my brother and my lover; but between a brother who loved, and a lover who hated me. It was a dreadful trial. I could neither eat nor sleep. I did nothing but think about it. "Would Recesvinto believe me if I wrote to him? Had I not fallen too low in his esteem for him even to believe my word? He might take it as a mean, vile stratagem to possess myself of his person, and then—oh horror!"

But I could not believe this of him. "He is too noble, too unsuspicious, for this base thought ever to cross his mind."

But then if he came, an army would accompany him; he would come suddenly upon my brother, unawares, and then what would be the result?

"I will risk everything," I at last exclaimed. "After all, I love Recesvinto more than Fruela, and his love is necessary to my happiness."

That very day one of my pages might have been seen crossing the drawbridge over the moat just as the sentinels were about to raise it for the night, and for long afterwards I remained on the top of the old Roman tower, with my eyes anxiously fixed upon him as he galloped towards Toledo on a fine Arab horse, until the shades of night finally concealed him from my sight."

"And now, my beloved Walter," said Conchita, "the rays of the rising sun are about to conceal *me* from your sight, and I must say good-bye till to-morrow, when I hope to finish the story of that life, in which I began to suffer for your love,—for this very love which to-day makes us both so happy."

And she was gone! Gone once more to the celestial spheres where she dwelt. Her graceful spirit form vanished from my sight as a cloud of azure and gold, and I was left alone—alone once more for the day.

END OF VOL. II.

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